

Israeli jets break the sound barrier over Beirut

BEIRUT (AP) — Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hizbollah positions in the western Bekaa Valley Sunday. There were no reports of casualties. Earlier, Israeli planes broke the sound barrier over Beirut, rattling windows of apartment buildings. Four Israeli jets fired 12 rockets at targets in the Wadi Zella in the western sector of the Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon. An Israeli military spokesman said the pilots of the raiding jets reported "good hits" and returned safely to their bases. The raids came a few hours after Hizbollah shelled an outpost of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon militia in Wadi Zella just north of the occupation zone. A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut, however, had no comment on the air raid that came 95 minutes after two Israeli jets flew low over Beirut, breaking the sound barrier.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تيمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي.

Princes Abdullah, Faisal, Ghazi received by Saudi crown prince

RIYADH (Petra) — Their Royal Highnesses Princes Abdullah, Faisal and Ghazi Ben Mohammad, His Majesty King Hussein's advisor on tribal affairs, Sunday held talks with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, deputy prime minister and commander of the national guard, and reassured him on the King's health. The Saudi crown prince wished King Hussein a speedy recovery and safe return home. Attending the meeting were Prince Abdul Aziz Ben Abdullah, a Saudi Royal Court consultant, Jordanian Ambassador in Riyadh Hani Khaleifah and other senior officials from both countries.

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Iraqi teenager killed by Gulf war landmine

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Iraqi teenager was killed and another injured by a landmine left over from the Gulf war eight years ago, the official INA news agency said Sunday. The tragedy took place in a region to the west of Baghdad, killing 15 year-old Saad Nadhem and injuring 17-year-old Ziad Jassem, the agency said. It was the sixth in a string of similar incidents this year that have left 10 people dead, INA said. Some 56,000 explosive devices have already been cleared from the region, including mines, cluster bombs and shells, INA said.

Two injured by landmines in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — A child lost an arm and a workman suffered serious leg injuries when they inadvertently set off unexploded mines in separate incidents this month, the independent Landmine Struggle Centre (LSC) said on Sunday. The recently established LSC called on local and international organisations to help "Egypt put an end to this permanent threat." According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, Egypt has nearly 25 per cent of all the world's landmines, left over from World War II, and from wars with Israel in 1956, 1967 and 1973.

Violence in Toulouse after youth gunned down by police

TOULOUSE (AFP) — Six police officers were injured Sunday as violence broke out in a suburb of the southwestern French town of Toulouse, after a youth was gunned down by police overnight, police said. The first violence erupted in the late afternoon, when about a hundred young people in the Mirail and La Reynerie neighbourhoods set fire to garbage bins and cars and set the local police station ablaze, police said. A bus was also set alight amid rampant vandalism. Protesters also threw various objects at police, who responded by firing tear-gas.

Egyptian MPs make landmark visit to Iran

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian parliamentary delegation flew to Iran on Sunday for the first visit of its kind since diplomatic relations were severed 20 years ago, airport officials said. The three-man delegation will attend a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) aimed at creating an Islamic parliamentary union and spend several days in Iran. The three MPs — Mohammad Abdullah, Ahmad Omar Hashem and Amin Mubarak — respectively head parliament's foreign relations, religious affairs and industry committees. Diplomatic relations between Iran and Egypt were broken in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution which toppled Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a former ally of Egypt who sought exile in Cairo and was buried there.

Clinton-Netanyahu talks seem to yield no concrete results

By Alia A. Toukan and agencies

WEST JERUSALEM — Talks here between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday appeared to have failed in yielding concrete results for the resumption of the implementation of the recent Palestinian-Israeli Wye peace accords. But much hinges on the outcome of the American leader's landmark visit to Gaza today, sources in Israel said.

Netanyahu stuck to his guns yesterday, insisting that Israel will not carry out the next troop withdrawal from West Bank areas unless the Palestinian National Authority meets conditions set by his cabinet earlier this month.

Last week, Netanyahu announced that the next troop withdrawal, scheduled for Thursday, will not take place until the PNA stops "inciting violence," and halts demands for the release of Palestinian prisoners "with blood on their hands" held in Israeli jails, and pronouncements that it intends to declare an independent Palestinian state in May 1999, when the Palestinian-Israeli Oslo interim peace accords expire.

The PNA must "officially and unequivocally" renounce its intent to unilaterally

declare an independent Palestinian state in May, the Israeli premier said Sunday in a joint press conference with Clinton in West Jerusalem, after the two leaders held lengthy talks.

"No-one can expect Israel to hand over another inch of territory, unless and until, a correction is made," he said.

Netanyahu accused the PNA of initiating a "campaign of incitement" following the signing of the Oct. 23 Wye peace accord, of organising violent demonstrations, and of failing to live up to its commitments to collect illegal weapons and reduce the size of its armed forces.

While asserting "unshakeable" U.S. support for Israel's security, Clinton, however, insisted that "only peace will bring about security."

The PNA has taken "important" steps since the Wye accord, said Clinton. The Palestinians have "deepened their security cooperation with Israel, acting against terrorism, issuing decrees for the confiscation of illegal weapons and dealing with incitement, and taking concrete steps to reaffirm the decision to amend the PLO Charter."

But, he said, "they (the PNA) could still be doing better" to preempt violence.

"Have the Palestinians fulfilled all their commitments?"



President Clinton shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before the start of a bilateral meeting on Sunday. Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai is at right and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is at left (Reuters photo)

he asked. "They certainly could be doing better to preempt violent demonstrations in the street. This is a terribly important matter."

Clinton renewed his pledge to ask Congress to provide \$1.2 billion to help Israel take new security measures to

carry out the Wye accords. This is in addition to the \$3 billion a year in annual U.S. economic and military assistance that Israel gets.

At the same time, he cautioned that Israel needed to reach out and not be preoccupied with security or live in a

permanent state of siege.

The Palestinians, he said in a speech to a mostly young audience at the Jerusalem Convention Centre, "feel you should acknowledge they, too, have suffered and have legitimate expectations that should be met."

"And they are right, too," Clinton said.

He said the "Palestinian leaders must work harder to keep the agreement and avoid the impression that unilateral actions can replace agreed-upon negotiations."

"But it is vital that you

(Israelis), too, recognise the validity of this agreement and work to sustain it and all other aspects of the peace process," he said in a speech interrupted repeatedly by enthusiastic applause.

(Continued on page 12)

Palestinians appear to be softening stance on vote

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian officials said Sunday there would be a show of hands to affirm the abrogation of PLO Charter clauses seeking Israel's destruction, a move that could help solve the key dispute overshadowing U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he would not withdraw troops in the West Bank unless the Palestine National Council (PNC) votes to annul the offending charter clauses.

Clinton is to address the PNC session in Gaza City on Monday, along with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

In the West Bank, new violence erupted despite efforts by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to calm the situation during the Clinton visit. Palestinians threw stones at Israeli troops in several West Bank towns, including Ram north of Jerusalem. A 15-year-old Palestinian girl protesting the Clinton visit wounded an Israeli teenager near the Shavei Shomron settlement in a stabbing attack.

Two U.S. flags were burned at a rally attended by 2,000 followers of a radical PLO faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine that opposes the peace accords.

Monday's PNC session is the most sensitive stop of Clinton's three-day trip and could lead to a showdown if Clinton and Netanyahu disagree over whether the PNC has completed its task.

The Palestinians have insisted that a vote is not required by the Wye River peace agreement. The accord says the PNC must "reaffirm" a letter to Clinton in which Arafat lists the charter clauses considered revoked.

However, on Sunday, the Palestinians appeared to be softening their position. Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour said Arafat will ask the delegates at the end of his speech whether they support the peace process and the letter to Clinton.

"Then we will raise our hands and stand up and applaud," Asfour said. Despite the show of hands, this should not be considered a formal vote, Asfour said.

Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel was evasive when asked whether such a show of hands would satisfy Israel. "We're demanding a vote, but we're not going to discuss the technicalities in the media," he said.

The Israeli cabinet will meet Thursday or Friday to decide whether Israel would carry out the next troop withdrawal, said Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon. "As it looks now, I think it will be very hard for the government to approve it," he said.

Even if the PNC votes to satisfy Clinton, Netanyahu says the Palestinians will have to meet several other conditions before he will redeploy troops.

Netanyahu wants Arafat to withdraw publicly from inter-

actions to unilaterally declare a state in May and to accept Israel's terms for the release of Palestinian prisoners, a dispute that has triggered daily clashes in the West Bank.

Under the Wye agreement, Israel promised to release 750 prisoners by the end of January. Last month, Israel freed 250, but most of them were criminals.

The Palestinians said they were given to understand that those released would be prisoners held for anti-Israeli activities, but Israel has denied making such a promise.

In a nod to Clinton, Palestinian prisoners will suspend their week-long hunger strike to lower tensions, said Hisham Abdul Razek, a Palestinian cabinet minister for prisoner affairs.

The PNA has already cancelled a commercial strike in the West Bank and Gaza planned for Monday. Instead of the strike, church bells will ring in the biblical town of Bethlehem, one of the stops on Clinton's itinerary.

Abdul Razek said he would meet with Clinton on Monday, along with children of prisoners, to hand over a petition with more than one million signatures demanding the release of the prisoners.

In a letter to Clinton, the Palestinian Prisoners' Association wrote: "Mr. President, five years have passed since the signing of the peace agreement and we are still in Israeli jails... This is against the spirit of a just peace."

'Iraq not excluded from participation in '99 Pan-Arab Games in Amman'

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Minister of Youth and Culture Tahar Sata'a Hassan on Sunday denied news reports that Jordan would not allow Iraqi athletes to take part in the Pan-Arab Games scheduled to take place in the Kingdom next August.

Hassan said all Arab states, including Iraq and Kuwait, were invited to participate in the August 15-31, 1999 event.

The minister was responding to reports that Chairman of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al Sabah, was quoted as saying that Jordan "promised" his country that it will not allow Iraqi athletes to attend the Arab Games.

Asked whether Jordan has

received Kuwait's reply, the minister said, "we hope they will take part."

Iraq's participation in the Arab sporting contests has often been a thorny issue because Kuwait usually conditions its participation on Iraq's exclusion from these events.

Iraq was barred from taking part in the 1992 and 1997 Pan-Arab Games, which were held in Syria and Lebanon.

Sheikh Ahmad, who is also chairman of the Asian Olympic Committee, told AFP that Iraq will be welcomed to take part in the upcoming event only if it releases Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraqi jails, allegedly held since the 1990 Iraqi invasion

of Kuwait.

Baghdad has repeatedly denied that it is holding any Kuwaiti prisoner.

Minister Hassan stressed that "no one will be prevented from participation," in the event, adding that in previous meetings with Sheikh Ahmad, he told the Kuwaiti official that Iraq would be invited to the Games.

A local sports official, who asked not to be named, said that Jordan does not want to "politicise the event" and wants all Arab countries to be present.

"We want to tame politics for the sake of sport not the opposite. We do not want the event to become prey to Arab differences," the official told the Jordan Times.

Ali Sa'd arrested in connection with alleged JD15m embezzlement

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Police have arrested the former board chairman and director of the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company, Ali Farid Sa'd, and 12 other employees at the tobacco manufacturer in connection with an alleged JD15 million embezzlement, a senior official said Sunday.

"Ali Sa'd was arrested on Saturday night along with the company's production director Mohammad Abu Hejja, as well as other employees," said the official who requested anonymity.

The alleged fraud was discovered by an auditor who was appointed by a special committee formed in early September to look after the financially troubled company, said Fathallah Emrani, vice president of the Jordan Trade Union and a member of the tobacco company's new board.

"The auditor examined the company's records and submitted his final report to the new management which sent the report to the prosecutor general," Emrani told the Jordan Times Sunday.

(Continued on page 12)

Islamic Jihad leader arrested after threatening to kill Clinton

GAZA CITY (AP) — The leader of the Islamic Jihad opposition group was detained by Palestinian police Sunday after he said in a TV interview that he would not hesitate to kill U.S. President Bill Clinton if he had the chance.

The Islamic leader, Abdullah Shami, was taken into custody on Sunday afternoon, as he walked from a Gaza City junior high school where he teaches to his home in the Shihadeh district, said a Palestinian police official who spoke

on condition of anonymity.

In an interview with the Spanish TV station Antenna 3, Shami had said earlier Sunday that if it wasn't for Clinton's huge security detail, he would kill the president when he comes to the Gaza Strip on Monday.

Clinton is in the Mideast to try and salvage the accord he worked out between Israelis and Palestinians at Wye River in Maryland in October.

However, Shami said he knew of no specific plans to

attack the president. "I don't know of anybody in Gaza who is thinking of killing Clinton now," Shami said.

"But if the Wye River agreement involves a change in the Palestinian position to the worse, and somebody does kill him, I will be happy," said Shami, relaxing in his Gaza City office decorated with Islamic calligraphy praising God.

Asked if he would kill Clinton, he said: "If I could I would, with every method I

can muster. I would not hesitate." Clinton is coming with 1,200 security men.

Palestinian Islamists oppose Wye because it does not finalise Palestinian claims to statehood and sovereignty in Jerusalem, and because it explicitly recognises Israel's right to exist.

The Islamists also accuse Arafat of kow-towing to Israel and the Americans during an increase in violence sparked by an Israeli refusal to release Palestinians jailed for anti-

Israel activities.

Arafat has cracked down on Islamists since Wye, and Hamas — the more significant Islamist group — has kept its criticism of the Clinton visit to a minimum, fearful of further restrictions.

Clinton's visit is seen by the Palestinians and Israelis as endorsing Palestinian aspirations to statehood, and Arafat is anxious to make the U.S. leader feel welcome.

Israel rejects the establishment of a Palestinian state, and

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has expressed its displeasure with some aspects of the Clinton visit — but Shami says he still identifies Clinton with the Israeli enemy.

"Our people know that the bullets that are killing our sons in the West Bank are Israeli bullets, that the bulldozers that are building the settlements are Israeli, the aircraft that bombed our refugee camps and our homes are American planes," he said.

Ocalan cuts ties with guerrillas

TUNCELI (R) — Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan said on Sunday he was cutting off relations with the armed conflict his Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) was fighting with Turkish security forces.

"If the guerrillas want to continue what they have been doing for 15 years, then I have nothing to do with them," he told the Kurdish Med TV channel.

Ocalan spoke to the channel from Rome where he is under heavy guard after being arrested last month entering Italy.

The PKK founder did not make clear whether he was surrendering his control of the organisation, which has both an armed and a political wing. Turkey brands Ocalan a "terrorist" and holds him personally responsible for more than 29,000 deaths in the conflict between security forces and the PKK, fighting for self-rule in Turkey's mainly-Kurdish southeast.

U.S. embassy in Saudi warns Americans of possible attack

DUBAI (R) — The U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia told Americans in the kingdom on Sunday there was a strong possibility of a "terrorist" attack on U.S. targets in the Gulf in the next month and advised them to exercise caution.

"The embassy has information indicating a strong possibility that terrorist elements are planning an attack against U.S. targets in the Gulf, possibly in the next thirty days," said the message to Americans.

A copy of the message was obtained by Reuters.

"All American citizens should remain alert to any suspicious activity and take precautionary steps to reduce the profile and vulnerability of any U.S. facilities," it said. The embassy advised the 35,000 Americans living in the kingdom, including about 5,000 military personnel based there, to be vigilant, take steps to "increase their security awareness," maintain a low profile, vary travel routes and treat mail from unfamiliar sources with suspicion.

"Any suspicious activity, individuals or vehicles

should be reported."

The message did not say who the "terrorist elements" were.

The message updates a warning on Nov. 13 of continuing threats of attacks by leading Saudi dissident Osama Ben Ladeo against Americans in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi dissident has been indicted for attacks on Americans, including the August bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Five Americans were killed by a car bomb at a U.S.-run military training

centre in Riyadh in 1995 and in 1996 a truck bomb at a U.S. military housing complex in the eastern city of Dhahran killed 19 U.S. servicemen.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef was quoted early in November as saying Ben Laden did not mastermind the two attacks.

He did not rule out that people adopting Ben Laden's Islamist ideology may have carried out the bombings.

Security has since been stepped up at official U.S. complexes in the kingdom.

Turkey's Ecevit searches for minority government backers

ANKARA (R) — Turkish leftist Bulent Ecevit on Monday starts searching for backers for a minority government, a bid the opposition says is doomed and big business fears will bring weak leadership during economic hard times.

If he succeeds, the government would be Turkey's sixth since 1995 and destined to last only until April 1999, when general elections are scheduled, 20 months before they are due.

"We can do this," Ecevit told the conservative Cumhuriyet newspaper on Sunday. "I don't think there will be a problem either from

the point of view of democracy or of time."

The main opposition Islamists disagree.

"The wish for a minority government is an empty expense of effort," Anatolia news agency quoted Islam-based Virtue Party leader Recai Kutan as saying.

Business leaders and unions, seeing dark clouds of recession on the horizon, have called for a strong government to guide the country. They fear a minority government would be an ineffectual stop-gap as the country drifts toward polls and economic rot.

But Ecevit's options are

limited. He is a secularist opposed to allowing the Islamists into power and two conservative parties are divided by personal acrimony.

The political instability comes against a backdrop of growing economic gloom.

The caretaker government of conservative Mesut Yilmaz on Friday unveiled measures to shield the economy. The government is to increase the capital of Turkey's export-import bank Eximbank to boost stagnant exports through cheap loans.

Turkish banks and financial institutions are to be exempted from a six percent Resource Utilisation and

Support Fund charge in their foreign borrowings.

Ecevit begins his search for support with a minor conservative leader early on Monday. The leftist, a prime minister in the 1970s, says he will talk to everyone, including the deeply distrusted Islamists.

If Ecevit fails, Demirel can appoint his own interim administration, but the constitution obliges him to give the Islamists, the biggest group in parliament, the most seats in the cabinet.

Pressure from the secularist military forced the collapse of an Islamist-led government in 1997.



CLASHES IN WEST BANK: A Palestinian man throws a rock with a slingshot Sunday at Israeli troops in the West Bank. Undercover Israeli police agents had arrested three Palestinians for stone-throwing during clashes at an area on the border with Jerusalem. Clashes were also reported in Bethlehem as U.S. President Bill Clinton met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to try to salvage the Wye River peace accords (Reuters photo)

Turkish air force chief visits Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Turkish air force chief General Ilhan Kilic arrived in Israel on Sunday for a three-day visit.

Kilic will visit air force bases and weapons factories accompanied by his Israeli counterpart General Eitan Ben Eliahu and will also meet President Ezer Weizman. Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and army Chief-of-Staff Shaul Mofaz.

Israel and Turkey signed a military cooperation agreement in February 1996, triggering the anger of several Arab and Muslim countries.

They signed a \$630 million contract in November 1996 for the upgrading by Israeli Aircraft Industries of 54 F-4E Phantom fighter-bombers for the Turkish air force.

In September Israel signed a \$70 million contract with Turkey to upgrade 48 training jets.

In October, a Turkish newspaper reported an agreement under which Turkish firms will be involved in construction of a new type of ground-to-air missile, a more sophisticated version of Israel's Popeye.

The two countries have also carried out joint naval manoeuvres and air force training exercises under the cooperation pact.

Iran's press is battleground for the country's future

By Scheherazade Faramarzi
The Associated Press

TEHRAN — Waving old copies of the banned liberal newspaper *Tous*, Iranian youths at a pro-democracy rally shouted as if they were fans at a soccer match: "Give us back the freedom paper."

"Freedom, forever," they yelled, their voices getting louder and angrier.

"Yazdi, resign, resign," they chanted, referring to Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, who as the head of the powerful judiciary is behind the closure of about half a dozen newspapers and the arrests of several journalists.

The reason behind the anger is that Iran's newspapers are at the centre of the battle over the country's future between President Mohammad Khatami and the hard-line clerics who oppose his efforts to liberalise government and society.

The newspapers do not just cover the news, they are the news.

Since Iran has no formal political parties, most of Tehran's 37 papers have become stand-in parties — each with its own platform — in what has become the liveliest democratic debate the country has ever seen.

The moderates claim about a dozen newspapers — the most popular being *Salam*, *Hamshahri*, *Zan*, *Jahan-e-Islam*, *Asr-e-Ma* and *Arya*.

The hard-line papers include *Kayhan*, *Resalat*, *Jomhuri Islami*, *Shalamcheh* and *Abzar*. *Shalamcheh* reflects the extremist views of the Ansar-e-Hizbolah, a vigilante group that regularly breaks up pro-democracy rallies and attacks dissidents.

The outspoken *Tous*, closed down in September, has become a symbol in the struggle for a free press. Its editor, Masallah Shamsolvaezin, says the liberal papers started after Khatami's election are being attacked by hard-liners to undermine the president.

"They were unable to fight him directly, so they attacked his achievements to weaken him," said Shamsolvaezin. "I believe that Mr. Khatami's programme of free expression has suffered a serious stroke and it is now in intensive care," said Shamsolvaezin, whose paper had a circulation of 300,000, the second largest in Iran.

Shamsolvaezin, who was jailed along with three other senior colleagues, said 30 vigilantes stormed his newspaper in September "by jumping over the wall," blindfolding them and making them stand against the wall.

"It was very uncivilised," he said at his Tehran home shortly after his release. "Tous' struggle to survive is typical of how the battle between moderates and hard-liners over Iran's future is being fought."

The paper began publishing with the name *Jameh* after Khatami became president in August 1997. A court order, alleging libel and fabrication of stories, closed it down last June.

It then reappeared under two other names — *Tous* and *Aftab-e-Emrooz* — after being given new licences to publish by the Ministry of Culture and Guidance, which is under Khatami's control.

Each time it was shut down by the judiciary, which is run by the hard-liners.

The paper was first closed after it reported that the commander of the Revolutionary Guards Corps, Gen. Rahim Safavi, told his troops in private meeting to "cut out the throats and tongues" of the liberal press.

But *Tous* had a stormy relationship with the hard-liners from the start, partly because it questioned the absolute powers of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The paper was closed for good June 16, a day after Khamenei ordered the judiciary to get tough with newspapers that he claimed had abused press freedom. Several other publications, including the lively *Rah-e-Now*, also were closed.

Shamsolvaezin won't apologise for questioning the leader's absolute powers and demands to know the legal reason his paper was shut down.

"The constitution stipulates that the leader is like any other citizen before the law," he said. "What did we do wrong? What did we violate? Give us a constitutional reason why and where we acted against the law."

But even some moderates say *Tous* went too far in attacking the right-wing clerics.

"Tous marched ahead with a sharp object and plunged it right into their stomachs," said Abbas Abdol, editor of the liberal daily *Salam*.

Some journalists also say *Tous* miffed Khamenei because it ignored an unspoken rule of Iranian newspapers — dedicating the top of the front page and a few inside columns to news about the leader and senior clerics.

But Ali Movahedi Savaji, a hard-line member of parliament, says the judiciary acted totally under the law in banning *Tous*.

"Over the past year, we gave them 114 warnings that they were violating the law. The press is free, but at the same time laws have to be obeyed," said Savaji.

Shamsolvaezin has a different view about so-called freedom in Iran following his jailing.

"We have freedom of expression in Iran," he said. "But the problem is freedom after expression."

Cairo press wants clashes to continue as Clinton visits

CAIRO (AFP) — The Cairo press called Sunday for Palestinians to continue violent clashes with Israeli troops as Bill Clinton prepares to make the first visit to the Palestinian territories by a U.S. president.

A resumption of the 1987-1993 "intifada" uprising against Israeli occupation is now the only way to force the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to respect Palestinian rights, the government newspaper *Al-Akhar* said.

"A resumed intifada is now the only way of dealing with the egomaniac Netanyahu, who believes he has the whole world at his command since the United States caved in the face of his arrogant pressure," the paper's editor, Galal Dawid, said in a front-page editorial.

"It is humiliating for the president of the world's most powerful country to give in to pressure from Netanyahu, the holder of a U.S. passport who was brought up in the back alleys of

New York, and go back on his decision to fly to Gaza on Air Force One," he said.

The U.S. president agreed to travel to the Gaza Strip by helicopter for his landmark visit Monday following huge pressure from Netanyahu who is desperate to deprive the visit of any implication of U.S. recognition of Palestinian sovereignty.

The Egyptian editor expressed his "joy at seeing the Israeli occupation forces terrorised by little stones."

Death sentences urged for Egyptian Islamists

CAIRO (AFP) — The prosecution in the case of 24 Islamists on trial for setting fire to video shops and planning acts of terrorism has called for the death sentence, court officials said Sunday.

The defendants, all members of the armed Islamic underground organisation *Gamaa Islamiya*, are accused of setting fire to four video

shops in Cairo and an advertising agency.

There were no casualties in the attacks against the video shops which Islamic militants regard as haram, or forbidden under religious law.

The accused are also charged with throwing explosives at police vehicles and police stations in the capital, injuring two policemen and a

civilian. In addition, they are accused of planning to assassinate a number of writers and pro-government journalists, including Ibrahim Nafeh and Ibrahim Saada, respectively chairmen of the *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akhar* newspapers, and also the head of the journalists' union, Makram Mohammad Ahmad.

JORDAN TELEVISION

TEL 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10Cartoon — Bauman
15:30David Copper Field
16:00Drama — Neighbours
16:30 Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
17:00Thalassa
18:15 Drama — Wind at My Back
19:00The Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:35The Parenthood
20:00Doc. — The Internet Cafe
20:30Drama — Big Sky
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30Drama — The Fix
23:30 Comedy — Keeping Up Appearances
23:59End of TX.

PRAYER TIMES

05:00Fajr
06:23(Sunrise) Duha
11:30Dhuhr
14:15Asr
16:38Maghrib
18:00Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 5930740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624853/4634811.

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.

Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138

Church of Presentation, Swe-
fieh Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679

The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331

The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-
ment of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise
slightly, skies partly cloudy, and

winds southeasterly moderate.
Scattered showers are expected
over the northern regions in the
afternoon. In Aqaba, it will warm,
cloudy, winds northerly moderate
to active, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman06/17

Aqaba14/24

Deserts05/19

Jordan Valley13/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 14 Aqaba 22 Humidity

readings: Amman 39 per cent,
Aqaba 45 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun05/15

Jerash07/19

Um Qays08/19

Madaba06/18

Petra07/18

Dead Sea14/26

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Rashid4875792
Dr. Ahmad Manna5359413
Dr. Walid Al Masri5675485
Dr. Khalil Jhal4784490

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy5336169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Al Salih02/246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy02/275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Fawaz Hamdallah 09/853644
Palestine Pharmacy09/835562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111

Civil Defence Department
.....5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
.....4630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade4617101

Blood Bank4775121

Highway Police5343402

Traffic Police4896390

Public Security Dept4630321

Hotel Complaints5605800

Price Complaints5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 487467

Amman Municipality Complaints
.....4787111

Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121

Overseas Calls0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs
.....4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Televisi4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5665137
Hussein Medical Centre5856856
Luzrila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642816
Akileh Maternity4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607580
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667227
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4771013
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/75
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al-Azhar Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Gov. Hospital09/83323
Zarqa National Hospital09/800560

Ibn Sina Hospital09/986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
.....09/990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Roman Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Ibn Ali Nafies Hospital
.....02/7101372, 02/7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital
.....02/7102831, 02/7102011
Speciality Hospital02/7103100

Other Flights

08:20Alexandria (BA)

09:30Cairo (MS)

10:00Khartoum (SD)

13:20Bahrain (GF)

14:45Doha (QR)

15:05Vienna (OS)

15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)

17:50Istanbul (SD)

18:40Beirut (ME)

19:15Frankfurt (LH)

22:25Tel Aviv (LY)

01:25Amsterdam (KL)

01:25Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
09:30Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)

(RW)

10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)

16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)

10:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)

00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)

(RW)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:15Sanaa (RJ)

08:30Damascus (RJ)

08:35Jeddah (RJ)

08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:30Beirut (RJ)

10:30Frankfurt, London (RJ)

11:00Istanbul (add) (RJ)

11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)

12:05Kuwait (RJ)



MINISTER MEETS WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR: Interior Minister Nayef Qadi on Sunday holds talks with U.S. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns on means of boosting bilateral relations in various fields. The meeting between Qadi and Burns touched upon efforts exerted by Washington to secure the implementation of the Wye River accord (Petra photo)

Government to review final report on IPC pipelines case tomorrow

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The fate of the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines case awaits a review of the final report of the official investigation committee by both the government and Parliament on Tuesday, an official source said.

"After reviewing the final report... the government will decide [Tuesday] whether or not to send the file to the prosecutor general," Minister of Water and Irrigation Hani Mulki told the Jordan Times on Sunday.

Mulki was authorised by the government to follow up on the IPC case after it halted on Nov. 21 all procedures related to the sale of 50 kilometres of 12-inch pipelines and 60 kilometres

of 16-inch pipelines. The government also ordered that work on removing the IPC pipelines be stopped. He will submit the final report to the Cabinet during its meeting tomorrow and will also meet with the House Energy and Agriculture Committee to discuss the IPC case.

The minister declined to comment on the content of the report, saying that it must first be reviewed by the government and Parliament.

Last week, the heads of two government-appointed committees, formed on Nov. 22 to look into the sale, and the representatives of the Audit Bureau concluded their joint assessment of the pipelines deal and submitted the final report to Mulki.

However, sources told the Jordan Times that the final report included details about the legality and the value of the bid as well as possible uses of the pipelines.

"It is clear in the final report that the tender was worth more than JD250,000, which the contractor had paid," said the source.

"As for the present condition of the IPC pipelines," said the source, "field investigations showed that about 50 per cent of the 12-inch pipelines and 25 per cent of the 16-inch pipelines were worn out."

In addition to the government instructions to store all IPC pipelines at the Aqaba Region Authority, Mulki also sent two legal

memoranda to Akram Amin Abu Amr, who won the bid on July 20, 1998, telling him to stop work immediately as he was violating the deal by taking parts of another pipeline that were not included in the official bid.

The pipeline, linking Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk with the Mediterranean city of Haifa via Jordan, was totally shut down after the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

It was initially built by a British company in the early 1930s for the Iraqi Petroleum Company.

In a minor Jordanian-Iraqi border demarcation in the early 1980s, Amman was eventually given additional parts of the pipeline which passed through the new areas.

Committee considers international appeal for aid to fight possible drought effects

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — An emergency committee, set up by the government and working on contingency plans to combat a looming drought, is considering an appeal to international organisations for aid.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, who heads the committee, told the Jordan Times that the government might ask the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Food Programme and other similar bodies to provide Jordan with financial and in-kind assistance to cope with the effects of a drought if the winter ends with low

amounts of rainfall.

A WFP officer in Amman, Mahmoud Abul Ruz, said he had not yet received an official request for help from the government, but added that as soon as his office receives an appeal, he would submit a report to WFP headquarters requesting immediate aid.

Describing the drought situation as "bleak," Abul Ruz said the emergency aid will be an additional allocation outside the programme's budget for Jordan.

The current WFP assistance scheme provides for a grant of \$16 million worth of cereals, oil and pulses to Jordan over the next five years. Since the project was

initiated in Jordan in 1963, \$190 million worth of such products have been granted to the Kingdom.

Several decisions were taken in a recent committee meeting regarding grains and fodder, which are certain to be harmed by a drought.

Committee members Qadi, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan, Minister of Trade and Industry Mobammad Hourani, Minister of Agriculture Mihjem Khreisha and Minister of Planning Nabil Ammar decided to reduce the price of barley from around JD100 per tonne to JD87 and the price

of bran from around JD95 per tonne to JD77, and keep fodder distribution centres open all over the country.

These measures will help breeders of over three million heads of livestock in Jordan deal with the problem of providing feed for their animals, according to the head of the Agriculture Ministry's Livestock Range Land Department, Mukhlis Amarin.

Ammar said the Kingdom annually produces only 30,000 tonnes of the 500,000 tonnes of barley needed to feed cattle and 13,000 of the 15,000 tonnes of bran required.

The committee said it will also provide breeders with

water from the reservoirs of the ministries of water and agriculture.

The assistant to the secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority, Thamer Alen, reported that the country's dams are well below normal levels for this time of year.

According to Alen, water levels have dropped as follows in the nation's dams: the King Talal Dam has dropped to 32 million cubic metres from 72mcm. Zighab Dam to 12mcm from 35mcm and Wadi Arab Dam to 6mcm from 16mcm. He said the Wadi Sha'eb and Kafraun dams as well as desert dams are nearly empty.

Iranian delegation meets with potash company officials

AMMAN (J.T.) — A visiting Iranian economic delegation Sunday met with officials of the Arab Potash Company to discuss Jordanian exports to Iran.

The company's chairman of the board, Saleb Irsheidat, and its director general, Nasser Saadoun, held talks with the delegation on Iranian companies' imports of Jordanian phosphate- and potash-based fertilisers. The Iranian delegation head, who presented a briefing on Iran's industries, voiced his country's desire to strengthen bilateral economic and trade relations.

The delegation's visit comes one day after the for-

mal inauguration in Amman of an exhibition of products of 300 Iranian national companies by HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid.

According to Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Ali Subhani, a joint Jordanian-Iranian committee is expected later this week to hold a meeting to sign minutes of deliberations which include 30 articles covering a wide range of bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

Subhani said these articles cover cooperation in air transport, navigation and banking, among other areas.

Maan Thibyan, president

of the Hashemite International Economic Cooperation Association, which organised the Iranian exhibition in conjunction with the Iranian-Jordanian company Edro-Expo, said the association plans to organise a Jordanian exhibition in Tehran in the first half of 1999.

Also Sunday, a 35-member Iranian delegation representing a university that trains college professors visited Al al Bayt University in Mafrqa and examined the university's Islamic studies courses.

The delegation leader briefed university officials on the Iranian teachers training system.

Workshop on maritime communications opens

AQABA (Petra) — A six-day regional workshop on developing maritime communications opened Sunday in Aqaba.

The first session dealt with modernising systems used to send SOS signals and developing coordination among the region's countries to provide assistance.

Minister of Post and

Telecommunications Suleiman Hafez delegated the president of the Aqaba Region Authority, Mobammad Smadi, to attend the meeting, which was organised in cooperation with the Jordan Telecommunications Company.

Smadi told delegates from 19 states that Jordan will offer its expertise and assistance to countries in the region and

facilitate the application of international regulations concerning maritime safety.

He noted that cooperation in this field will help protect world trade and ensure security and safety at sea.

According to Ahmad Shreideh, a Ministry of Post and Telecommunications official, the delegates will review developments in the maritime

and navigational communications systems fields and a draft plan for the participating countries.

Delegates represent the following states: Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Djibouti, Eritrea, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, France, Belgium and Norway.

Activists from refugee camp detained

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Police Saturday detained seven residents of Baqa'a refugee camp for distributing pamphlets and planning to hold rallies to protest against the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to scrap articles of the Palestinian National Charter, Interior Minister Nayef Qadi said Sunday.

Qadi said those detained were leftist and pan-Arabist political activists who were members of a delegation that was barred on Friday from travelling to Damascus to attend a conference by Syrian-based Palestinian opposition groups to condemn Arafat's plans.

"The detention is a precautionary measure. They will stay in custody for a few days then will be released," Qadi told the Jordan Times, without stating a specific date.

The minister said the arrests took place following "accusations" information that "some people were planning to hold protests because they were barred from travelling to Damascus to attend the conference."

"We had information on Saturday night that some people

would be arrested in Baqa'a governorate because they were planning activities that could destabilise public security and order," Qadi said.

"Their planned activities, which were ordered by their leadership who were banned from travelling to Damascus, included demonstrations, rallies and sit-ins," the minister said.

Those arrested were Abdullah Nseirah, Mobammad Sha'arout, Waleed Husni, Zaid Musawweh, Mobammad Saleh Wisah, Mahmoud Dmeiri and Kanan Muhyi Al Deen.

The government on Friday barred 50 opposition activists from travelling to Syria to attend a two-day meeting, which started Saturday with the participation of more than 300 political activists.

Among those barred from travel were the political bureau chief of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, Khalid Mish'al and two other Hamas members, Ibrahim Ghosheh and Musa Abu Marzouk.

Out of almost 70 persons from Jordan who were invited to attend the Damascus meeting, three were allowed to cross into Syria on Friday, 15 did not

go, and another five apologised saying they would not be attending the event, Qadi said.

A senior government official told the Jordan Times that the government decision to bar these activists from leaving the country was aimed at "avoiding any activity that would harm the proposed meeting of the Palestinian National Authority in Gaza."

"This is a historic moment. It is the beginning of the creation of a Palestinian state, and we do not want to see anyone weakening Arafat," the official said.

"We did not prevent members of professional unions from going [to Damascus], but only Jordanians who are members of political parties and groups," he added.

The official said Hamas leaders were barred from leaving the country "because they hold Jordanian passports and intend to participate in [anti-Arafat] activities."

A Hamas statement, which was made available to the Jordan Times, criticised the government for preventing its leaders from travelling to Syria and described the move as an "unwise and condemnable

action that does not serve Jordan's interests."

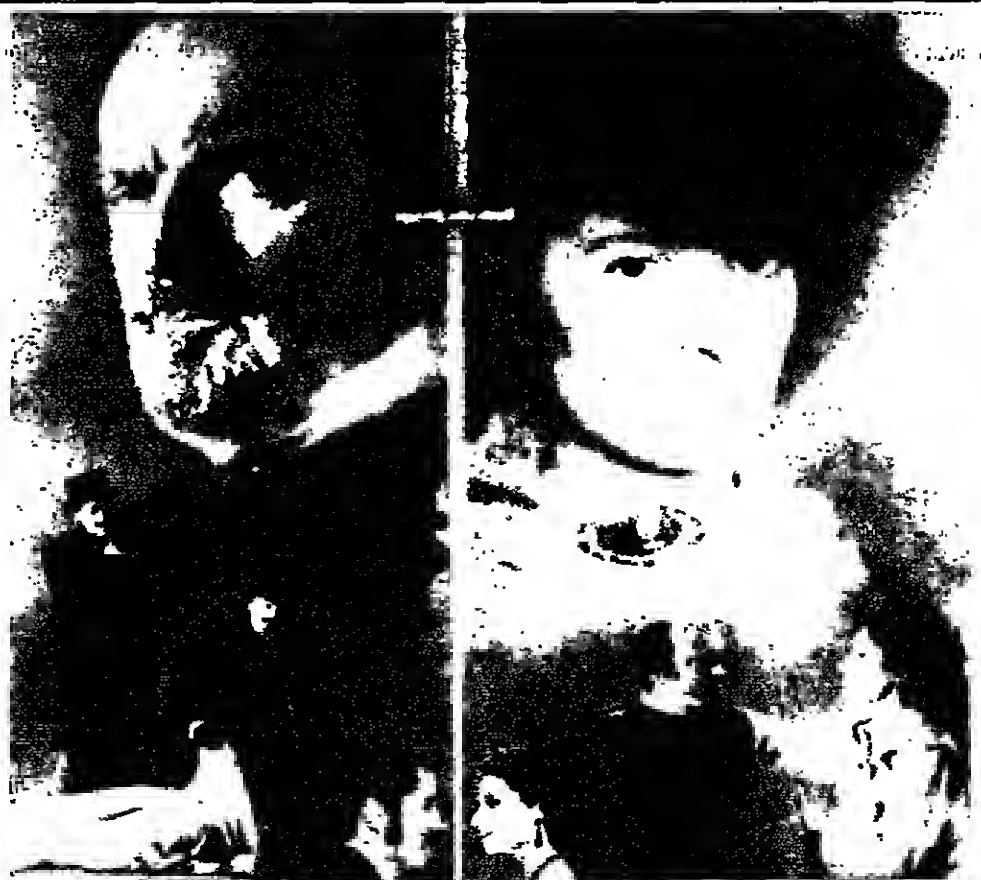
"This action is a violation of human rights and basic freedoms," the one-page statement said.

Speaking to Parliament on Sunday evening, Qadi told lawmakers that the travel ban decision was made upon information that Palestinian opposition groups had decided to undertake activities to create an "alternative leadership" to President Arafat and to undermine the peace process.

"Our precautionary measure was to prevent Jordanians from attending this conference by not allowing them to travel," the minister told the 80-member Lower House of Parliament.

But deputies criticised the government decision and said that it was "illegal" to ban the activists from travelling.

"The law does not punish people for their intentions," Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi said. "The law does not prevent people from travelling unless there is a court order to that effect. The government move is bringing us back to the era of martial law which we do not like."



Spanish film an 'animated portrait' of 19th century drama

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — Spain's entry in the 10th European Film Festival, "El Maestro de Escrima," or the master of fencing, is based on a book with the same title, and the screenplay was written by its author, Arturo Perez-Reverte. Watching this film can best be described as a watching a beautiful 19th century portrait animated with a perfect combination of dialogue, acting and photography.

The story takes place in Spain in 1868. The country has fallen into political turmoil; the reign of Queen Isabel II is drawing to an end, and Spain is on the verge of a revolution. But Jaime Asturiza, the best fencing master in Madrid, is not troubled by the political upheaval. He is a dignified and well-preserved man whose only passion in life is fencing, an art that has become old fashioned in the current times.

One day, a young woman (Adela de Otera) appears at his door and proposes to

become his disciple. Jaime refuses politely, but Adela exposes his weakness for women instantly and lures him into a short match. The scene takes place at daytime, in a spacious room, where a large mirror in the background reflects a beautifully choreographed match. A few seconds later, Jaime agrees to become Adela's master.

Jaime falls desperately in

love with Adela, but she soon abandons her lessons when she meets his friend, an aristocrat who charms her at first sight. Jaime's pride deters him from fighting to win her back and so he resigns himself to his fate. Later on, when his friend is found murdered with a foil, Jaime realises immediately that the stroke that killed him is the exact stroke he taught Adela earlier.

As the story develops, Jaime finds himself caught in the middle of the political turmoil that troubled Spain. He becomes exposed to the corrupted social fabric and decaying values when he finds that all his friends — both the aristocrats and patriots — are selling themselves and their country short for their own personal gains.

Eventually, he discovers that Adela works for a corrupt party that is trying to topple the monarchy. Both Jaime and Adela meet in the same room where they first saw each other, but this time, they both engage in a long unmerciful match. With one stroke in the eye, Jaime kills Adela and instantly receives her corpse lovingly in his arms.

In the end, Jaime decides to give up fencing as a symbol of his submitting to the collapse of the beautiful values and arts he had desperately tried to preserve. Although the conclusion of the story can be easily inferred at an early stage in the film, the events remained highly intense and engaging. So far, this was the best film to be shown at the European Film Festival.

'Government adjusts overtime allowance of pharmacists'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government has decided to reconsider the overtime allowance of pharmacists working in the public sector. Jordan Pharmacists Association Secretary General Talal Albo said Sunday.

The new allowance is expected to be 120 per cent of the base salary instead of 90 per cent as was stipulated in a 1997 memorandum signed between the government and the professional associations.

"During a meeting between Health Ministry officials and the pharmacists association, Health Minister Nael Ajlouni agreed that pharmacists should be treated like doctors and engineers working for the government," said Albo.

According to association figures, there are around 140 pharmacists working for the government. Albo said the new pay hike will cost the government around JD7,000 annually.

The Health Ministry is expected to submit the request for the new overtime allowance to the Cabinet soon. Albo told the Jordan Times.

In 1997, the government decided to grant doctors and engineers a 120 per cent overtime allowance after demands from the associations that professionals working in the public sector receive equal treatment as those employed with the Royal Medical Services and the Jordan University Hospital, who receive much better pensions and incentives.

For the past three years, the pharmacists association has been at odds with the government over changes to the 1988 unified allowances law.

Health Ministry officials were not available for comment.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS
 * "Face Off" at Books @ Cafe, Jabel Amman on Tuesday Dec. 15 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 5661717).
 * "Little Women" at the British Council, Jabel Amman on Tuesday Dec. 15 at 6:00 p.m. (children's film "The Adventure of Pinocchio" will also be screened on Wednesday Dec. 16 at 5:00 p.m.).
EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL
 * French film "Un Air de Famille" at 5:00 p.m.
 * Italian film "L'albero delle pere" at 8:00 p.m.
 (to be shown again on Tuesday Dec. 15 at 5:00 p.m.).
 (All films, with subtitles in English, are screened

at the Royal Cultural Centre).

LECTURES

* An English-language lecture: "A Comparative Approach to the Rule of Law in Developing Countries" by Steven Mayo, founder and executive director of the Institute for the Study and Development of Legal Systems at the American Center auditorium at 5:00 p.m.
 * Lecture on short story in Jordan by Nabil Suleiman of Syria at the Royal Cultural Centre at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* One-day exhibition of art works by Jordanian

and foreign artists at the Musician Cafe, Sweifish (Tel. 5929880) — (The exhibition will open on Tuesday Dec. 15 at 10:00 a.m.).

* Exhibition of Nabatean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street, until Dec. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).

* Display of posters marking the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights at the Greater Amman Municipality city hall, Ras Al 'Ain, until Dec. 17.

* "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

German Greens reform party for power

LEIPZIG, Germany (R) — Germany's Greens, holding their first party congress since entering government, adopted reforms at the weekend to bring unruly ecologist members into line with the leadership.

Top Greens hailed the creation of a formal forum for coordinating party policy as a way to end disputes that have dogged the party's 18-year history.

"This is about being capable of organising ourselves," Joschka Fischer, foreign minister in Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's government and the party's leading politician, told journalists at the congress in the eastern city of Leipzig.

"It's also about making sure we don't have to go through another election like the last one," he added, referring to a series of campaign blunders this year which nearly buried Greens hopes of winning national power.

Fischer, who courted controversy last week by urging NATO to soften its support for nuclear arms, has made no secret of the fact that he wanted the reforms to go much further.

He and other Greens moderates want to replace

the fiercely egalitarian ways inherited from the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, with structures much like those of larger political rivals.

But while the 750 delegates lifted a ban on Greens holding both public office and party positions, they resisted a move to create a formal party chairman role.

The congress also marked a victory for the party's feminist wing, with two women being installed for the first time as national party "co-spokeswomen" — the closest the Greens get to a leadership function.

Antje Radcke, a largely unknown 38-year-old single mother from Hamburg, was voted to join the re-elected Gunda Roedel in the position, thus fulfilling strict internal quota rules.

The feminist wing was enraged when men got two of three ministerial posts on offer to the Greens in Schröder's cabinet.

Aside from Fischer, Juergen Trittin was named Environment Minister and Andrea Fischer as Health Minister.

Delegates voted to create a 30-member "party council" set up to preempt

future policy conflicts between the party's leadership and its radical wing.

Fischer himself suffered humiliation last March when Greens pacifists unexpectedly rejected his plea to back the involvement of German troops in Bosnia peacekeeping — a move that has since been reversed.

The council will include representatives from the party's powerful regional groups but also Trittin, Andrea Fischer and leading parliamentarians.

While there was some dissent from delegates to easing the ban on holding both political and party office, most of those at the congress welcomed the changes.

"Some here are moaning that we are just one big rubber stamp for the leadership," said Ulrich Agurks, a long-time party member from the central state of Hesse.

"But they either have to change with us or be left out," Media commentators agreed the reforms showed a new seriousness within the party.

"The Greens have, as a new governing party, truly arrived," said the Welt am Sonntag newspaper.



Beauty 1999 — Miss Tahiti Mareva Galantier aged 19, waves after she was crowned Miss France 1999 by last year's winner Sophie Thalman (right) during a ceremony in Nancy, eastern France, Dec. 12. This annual beauty contest elects the French representative for the Miss World contest (Reuters photo)

Italy votes in key local polls

ROME (AFP) — Voters in Italy were going to the polls Sunday for the second round of local elections, seen as a key test of the popularity of the government Premier Massimo D'Alema.

More than four million voters are registered to choose local administrators in 36 constituencies, including the capital Rome.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and close at 10:00 p.m. (0900 GMT).

First-round polling on Nov. 29 was marked by apathy, with less than half of voters turning out.

In Rome, centre-left candidate Pasqualina Napolitano came out on top after first-round polling with 48.6 per cent of the vote. Silvano Maffa of the far-right National Alliance took 44.7 per cent.

Observers are also keen to test the level of support for the separatist Northern League. The party is hop-

ing to hold onto Treviso — where its candidate, outgoing mayor Giancarlo Gentilini, polled most votes, 43 per cent, in the first round — and increase its score in other areas.

D'Alema was appointed prime minister on Oct. 21. Along with members of his Social-Democratic party, his broad coalition government includes Communists, Christian-Democrats, centrists and greens.

The centre-left government of D'Alema's predecessor, Romano Prodi, fell on Oct. 9, after the Refounded Communist Party rejected his budget plans and forced a confidence motion.

The centre-right opposition protested D'Alema's appointment and called for fresh elections.

The local polls are the first elections to be held in Italy since the appointment of D'Alema to head Italy's 56th post-war government.

Pinochet denies claiming Britain betrayed and kidnapped him

LONDON (AFP) — Former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet has disavowed comments attributed to him in a British Sunday newspaper in which he apparently said the British government betrayed and "kidnapped" him.

The 83-year-old's adviser Patrick Robertson said: "Senator Pinochet has given no interview to the Sunday Mirror or indeed to any other newspaper."

Earlier the Sunday Mirror printed an apparent interview with Pinochet, in which it said the former dictator was "speaking through his close friend and former Cabinet Minister Sergio de Castro."

In it Pinochet was reported to have said: "I am the victim of a treason."

He was said to have added that he had been officially received by the British government when he arrived in

September, but "all the time they were plotting behind my back to arrest me."

Home Secretary Jack Straw was dismissed as a "kidnapper". Prime Minister Tony Blair as "untrustworthy" and anyone behind his arrest as "criminals".

Pinochet was also said by the Sunday Mirror to have complained of irrationality in the English courts system, and being held under house arrest at a private mansion west of London, which was "depressing".

But late Saturday, Robertson said: "He has not received any questions from the Sunday Mirror for an interview, or given any answers."

The sentiments expressed by Sergio de Castro are his own, and Senator Pinochet has no comment now or in the near future about the circumstances surrounding his detention in the United

Kingdom."

The apparent interview would have been a marked exclusive for the Sunday Mirror, particularly as Mirror newspapers are more known for their left-leaning views.

Since he arrived in the country in September, there have been no interviews with Pinochet and only the most obscure snapped pictures.

In his first public appearance since his arrest, the 83-year-old told Belmarsh magistrates court Friday that he refused to accept the right of anyone outside his homeland to try him over "all the lies of Spain."

He was formally told of the extradition warrant from Spain on which he was arrested in London on Oct. 16 and which accuses him of genocide, terrorism and torture during his 1973-1990 dictatorship.

The charges were brought by investigating Spanish

magistrate Baltasar Garzon, after news of Pinochet's recovery in London from back surgery leaked out, and relate to the deaths or disappearances of 94 Spaniards.

Since his arrest the British House of Lords has rejected Pinochet's claim, supported by the Chilean government, of sovereign immunity.

Wednesday, Straw allowed the proceedings to go ahead, judging he was unable to release him either on compassionate grounds or because the alleged crimes were political or the extradition warrant improperly drawn up.

The Chilean government immediately withdrew its London ambassador and suspended all official visits to Britain.

London has persistently maintained that the issue is not political, but merely one of carrying out its judicial obligations to Spain.

Ugandan police detectives open files on corruption suspects

KAMPALA (AFP) — Ugandan police have opened files on suspects named in a parliamentary report on privatisations for their alleged roles in derailing the process, the state-owned New Vision daily reported Sunday.

Among those mentioned in the parliamentary select committee's report were President Yoweri Museveni's brother, Major-General Salim Saleh, and four ministers and two government officials.

"Parliament has done its part, and ours is to investigate whether they contravened the law," a police Criminal

Investigation Department (CID) official told the paper.

The controversial 60-page report implicated Saleh in engineering the improper takeover of the Uganda Commercial Bank (UCB), which then went on to disburse millions of dollars in unsecured loans.

Saleh resigned over the scandal last weekend, but the parliamentary report urged that he be investigated and should face criminal charges.

The report also named the finance ministry's Minister of State for Privatisation Mathew Rukikaire, Works and

Transport Minister John Nasasira, Minister of State for Planning and Investments Sam Kutesa, and a former finance minister, who is now Constitutional Affairs Minister, Mayanja Nkangi, for their role in derailing the privatisation process.

The report said that Rukikaire and Nkangi should be disciplined for failing properly to oversee the exercise, while Kutesa and Nasasira were cited in connection with poor handling of the privatisation of Uganda Airlines Corporation.

Rukikaire is reported to

have resigned Friday, but there has so far been no official confirmation of the report.

The independent Monitor newspaper said Sunday that parliamentarians were pushing ahead with a censure motion against Rukikaire.

Museveni said this week that he was willing to prosecute anybody who was found to have acted illegally, including his own brother.

"I am ready to put anybody behind bars and confiscate legally all their properties, if they got them the wrong way," he told a press conference.

Chechen vice president accuses rebel warlord of murdering foreigners

MOSCOW (AP) — Chechenya has accused a renegade warlord in the break-away republic of kidnapping and brutally murdering four foreigners whose heads were found by a roadside last week, a news report said Sunday.

Appearing on state television, Deputy Prime Minister Turpal Atgeriyev claimed Saturday that rebel warlord Arbi Barayev masterminded the kidnapping and killing of three Britons and a New Zealander who were in Chechenya to install a cellular

phone system, according to the ITAR-TASS news agency.

The four men — Peter Kennedy, Darren Hickey and Rudolf Petschi of Britain and Stanley Shaw of New Zealand — were captured Oct. 3. Their decapitated heads were found at a roadside Tuesday, and officials speculate they were killed after a botched rescue attempt.

Chechen police have suggested before that Barayev, the head of a group called the Islamic Regiment, is connected with a wave of kidnappings

that has washed over Chechenya since the end of its 1994-96 independence war with Russia. The claims have never been proven.

Atgeriyev also said Barayev had kidnapped Chechenya's general prosecutor, Mansur Tagirov, Thursday. Tagirov, who was investigating the deaths of the four foreigners, was released Saturday.

Atgeriyev's claims came at the same time as Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov ordered a partial call-up of army reserves Saturday night

in an effort to fight crime in the region.

Also Saturday, Russian security forces freed a kidnapped Frenchman working for the U.N. refugee agency in neighbouring Ingushetia after more than 10 months in captivity.

Since Chechenya's independence war with Russia ended, the Caucasus region has been hit by violence as feuding gangs wage bloody turf wars. Hundreds of people have been kidnapped, mostly for ransom.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Auckland child porn raid prompts European arrests

WELLINGTON (R) — The discovery of Internet child pornography on a New Zealand man's computer has led to the cracking of a European porn ring, a New Zealand government department said Sunday. Forty three people in Britain and other parts of Europe had been arrested so far, the Department of Internal Affairs said in a statement. The department's Censorship Compliance Unit has inspectors who monitor Internet traffic for legally objectionable material. In a joint investigation with New Zealand police, it raided an Auckland man's computer on suspicion of possession and trading in pornography. While a prosecution case was prepared against him, the inspectors set to work tracing where the pornography had come from. "Information found on the man's computer was sent to the Greater Manchester police," the department said. "Consequently search warrants were served on individuals in England and Northern Ireland. The British investigation escalated to include addresses in Holland, France, Germany, Canada and the Middle East." The department said 58 individuals had been identified and further arrests were expected after a "huge" network of Internet child pornography had been uncovered. The head of the compliance unit, Steve O'Brien, said the case was a warning to people thinking of trading pornography over the Internet. "Offenders using personal computers to trade objectionable material may think they are isolated from surveillance but they are not," he said.

Radical drugs may beat neurological diseases

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Two new drugs invented in New Zealand which offer major hope for sufferers of progressive neurological diseases are to be clinical testing within a year, the Sunday Star-Times reported here. Developed by Professor Peter Gluckman of the Auckland Medical School, the drugs offer hope for victims of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis. One of the drugs is a hormone given by injection and the other is a small molecule; the newspaper said it was cheap to make and had few apparent side-effects. "We are on the verge of something unique," Gluckman said. "A small molecule which can be given quite straightforwardly, perhaps in pill form, doesn't have obvious side-effects, and which is very potent in stopping brain cells dying, is exactly what everyone has been looking for a long time," he said. "In a range of diseases, of which Alzheimer's is a classic example, we believe we can stop the progression of disease by stopping brain cells dying. The data we have is sufficient to merit large-scale investment," the professor said. "It is certainly the best thing on the horizon internationally."

Hand grenade attack injures 10 in Italian café

ROME (AFP) — The explosion of a hand grenade injured 10 people, one seriously, in a café in northern Italy overnight, police said Sunday. Investigators said unidentified assailants lobbed the grenade into the café in Reggio Emilia late Saturday. There were about 20 customers at the time, mostly from the southern Calabria region. The attack was believed to have been carried out in retaliation for the murder four days earlier of a 26-year-old Calabrian man.

3 inmates missing after Spanish prison open day

MADRID (AFP) — Three inmates escaped from a Spanish jail during a prison open day, the daily ABC reported Sunday. More than 700 people toured the Alcala-Meco prison in a Madrid suburb during Saturday's event — but when guards came to lock up, they found they were three prisoners short. The inmates are believed to have scaled a wall and made off in a guard's car.

Diana's butler dumped by memorial fund

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana's former butler has been ditched by the fund set up after her death to handle the millions of pounds donated in her memory, according to newspaper reports. Paul Burrell was appointed events and fund-raising manager in March but the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Committee, which at the last count had collected \$85 million (\$143 million) since her death in a Paris car crash last year, is phasing out his post, the Mail Sunday newspaper said. The News of the World added that Burrell had been told, at a lunch Tuesday, to clear his desk by Christmas. "Paul is deeply upset and feels that his loyalty is being thrown back in his face," the Mail quoted a friend of Burrell's as saying. "It is very sad and deep down he must be very angry." Diana described Burrell as "her rock". He was her most constant companion after she separated from Britain's heir to the throne, Prince Charles, in 1992. Back in March, when he was appointed as chief fund-raiser for the memorial fund, Burrell said: "It's a way of carrying forward what I began 10 years ago in a private way."

German news presenter risks job for glamour exposure

BONN (AFP) — A presenter on one of Germany's main television news shows risks losing her job after posing in just high heels and sexy underwear for a leading German people magazine, the Bild paper said Sunday. Susan Strahne, who six years ago, at the age of 24, became the youngest presenter on Tagesschau, broke from the evening news show's traditional conservatism to appear in the glossy Gala magazine as a femme fatale in stockings and underwear. German viewers, more used to seeing only Strahne's modestly clad torso, were at the least surprised to see the full extent of her charms. Her employers were clearly not impressed. Juergen Kellermeier, head of programming for the first channel ARD, which airs Tagesschau, warned Strahne not to "undermine her position," adding that the news programme had "minimal demands for credibility and seriousness." Members of the ARD supervisory committee also lashed out. Committee member Wolfgang Stoeckl said: "When a presenter does not abide by certain rules, then in the long term she should leave."

N. Korean war rhetoric eases after talks with U.S.

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea's belligerent rhetoric towards the United States eased Sunday after the two sides cited progress in their talks on easing tension over an underground site officials fear could be used to revive Pyongyang's nuclear arms programme.

The Stalinist nation kept up an anti-U.S. drive through its official media Sunday, but it was toned down compared to last week when it warned the United States was "owing to ignite the train of war" and vowed its people were "filled with the fighting spirit to annihilate the enemy."

Sunday the official daily Rodong Sinmun did however repeat its usual demand for the withdrawal of some 37,000 U.S. troops from South Korea.

"The situation on the Korean peninsula is running towards explosion with each passing day. This is entirely owing to the U.S. imperialists' occupation of South Korea and new war preparations," the daily said.

It also lashed Washington for maintaining a "policy of strength" by ignoring the North's "four peace overtures."

The apparent change followed talks in New York between U.S. and South Korean officials on a U.S. demand for access to the underground site.

The two sides closed their six-day meeting Friday, citing progress. They also agreed to meet again, though no date was announced.

Washington has demanded unconditional access to the underground site at Kumchangni, northwest of the Yonghyon nuclear complex shut down in 1994 under a landmark deal between Washington and Pyongyang.

But North Korea has rejected the demand and sought \$300 million in compensation for inspections. Washington has refused.



Members of a Puerto Rican socialist group help paste a banner on the hood of a car calling people not to vote in the statehood referendum. Some two million registered voters were scheduled to go to the polls to decide on whether the Puerto Rican authorities should present the U.S. Congress with a petition to make Puerto Rico a U.S. state (Reuters photo)

Puerto Rico votes on whether to become U.S. state

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AFP) — As some 2.2 million Puerto Ricans prepared to go to the polls Sunday in a non-binding referendum on their future, the only certainty was that they would not vote to cut this island's century-old U.S. ties.

According to the most recent poll published Saturday in the San Juan Star, the two leading options — statehood and "none of the above" — are in a virtual dead heat.

Other options are maintaining the island's status as a U.S. commonwealth, independence, or "free association," that is, commonwealth status with extra rights.

"Whoever wins, it won't mean anything," says Tony Lopez, who works at a car rental agency. "The political status we have is obsolete."

"We've been with the Americans for 100 years. Becoming a state would be easy," he says. "Statehood is progress."

Sunday's vote will be the third referendum on this island's future in three decades.

Many here hope it will end a century-long identity crisis that began when the United States took the island from Spain as a spoil of war.

The latest poll shows 47.6

per cent favouring statehood, with Governor Pedro Rossello leading the charge. But the same poll shows another 47 per cent intending to vote for "none of the above."

That's the option put forward by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and San Juan Mayor Sila Maria Calderon, seen by many as a rival to Rossello for elections in the year 2000.

Voting for statehood, Calderon says, would be "going in without guarantees... but with the imposition of federal taxes."

"We don't want any of the options," Rossello insists he invited the political parties to offer

their ideas, but that they refused.

The United States is under no obligation to act on the referendum result but Rossello said it would be noted and if the vote for statehood were carried, a transition plan would be presented to the U.S. Congress.

The U.S. administration has given little reaction so far to the referendum, with White House spokeswoman Julie Goldberg saying: "We believe that the decision of the people of Puerto Rico to determine their future is properly made by the people of Puerto Rico."

However former president George Bush published an open letter in local newspapers Saturday saying Puerto Rico would be welcomed as a state of the union.

Efforts by proponents of statehood to mobilise support have grown strident in recent days. Puerto Rico's Secretary of State, Norma Burgos, has said that any potential voter who favours statehood but fails to cast a vote is a "traitor to the cause," adding: "The commonwealth's days are numbered. We need all your votes."

Former Puerto Rican governor Luis Ferré, 94, who founded the commonwealth's modern pro-state-

hood party, also appealed to voters to support a future of U.S. statehood for the island.

"I speak to you as a grandfather: We have to demonstrate that we want equality," he said.

Statehood opponents — including the PPD — say joining the union would threaten Puerto Ricans' identity and the Spanish language, the only tongue of more than 70 per cent of people here.

Statehood backers say it will end Puerto Rico's colonial status, bring real representation in the U.S. Congress with two senators and six representatives, and a better investment climate.

Puerto Ricans have had U.S. citizenship since 1917 but no voting representation in the U.S. Congress and no vote in U.S. presidential elections.

Islanders pay no federal tax, and more than half receive some form of federal government aid.

Until now, as shown by referenda in 1967 and 1993 when changes were voted down, Puerto Ricans have been comfortable with commonwealth status.

Puerto Rico already has its own national anthem, sends its own team to the Olympic Games and its own representative to Miss Universe contests.

Rockets in Kabul kill at least 17, wound 80 others

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Terrorised residents scrambled for cover as successive rocket assaults

shook the war-ravaged capital Sunday killing at least 17 people and wounding more than 80 others, said eyewitnesses and officials.

The worst barrage shattered a northern neighbourhood of Kabul killing at least 15 people and wounding about 70 others, they said.

The first attack of the day, also in the same neighbourhood, occurred at dawn killing a 15-year-old boy and wounding his father.

The latest assault in early afternoon hit a residential area near the combined military and civilian airport. A child was killed and 11 people, including eight women, were hurt when 11 rockets rained down on their homes.

No one took responsibility for the rocket attacks, but they all came from north of the city where anti-Taliban fighters loyal to ousted military chief Ahmed Shah Massoud are deployed.

"We don't know how many more Afghans will be killed by Afghans... for how many years can this war will drag on?" said Ghulam Sakhi, a shopkeeper who was hiding in a basement of a six-story apartment building along with about 12 other people.

Some of the worst damage in the relentless rocket attack — one of the worst in recent months — was caused by one rocket that landed on the road in front of a moving bus packed with people, said eyewitnesses.

Taxi drivers in the area grabbed the dead and wounded and rushed them to nearby hospitals. On the cold road dozens of people

lay wounded, bleeding and pleading for help.

Taliban soldiers in pickup trucks picked up the wounded and took them to the city's hospitals.

But at the hospitals doctors and nurses struggled to treat the worst with only a small amount of medicine. In some hospitals there was no anaesthetic and painkilling drugs had to be bought from the market.

The International Red Cross ambulances screamed into the neighbourhood and hurried wounded to the two hospitals that it supplies with medicines.

In one taxi, 7-year-old Zameen wailed and clung to her mother. The little girl's leg was broken. Her mother cried and scolded her daughter saying: "Why did you go outside. I told you stay in the house."

After one attack dozens of relatives gathered at the shattered home of 15-year-old Zabiullah in Kalai Patula neighbourhood to mourn his death. They wrapped the boy's body in a white shroud and placed him in the centre of the rubble, while they sat around him wailing and crying.

Zabiullah's father was in a nearby hospital, neighbours said.

His mother and sisters had been visiting a relative when the rocket hit, they said.

In recent days there have been several bouts of heavy fighting between Massoud's troops and Taliban soldiers at the front line barely 20 kilometres north of Kabul.

The Taliban, which espouse a harsh brand of Islamic law, rule roughly 90 per cent of the country while their opponents the remaining 10 per cent.

EU recommits to expansion; for 11 candidates picture stays fuzzy

VIENNA, Austria (AP) — For Cyprus and 10 East European nations hoping to join the European Union, the picture can get fuzzy: if the EU has a road map for its largest expansion ever, why is this ride so bumpy?

Nine years after the Berlin wall fell, the East Europeans still get lofty declarations about a new Europe but no sense when they'll be part of it.

The 15 EU leaders ended a two-day summit Saturday, again declaring their eastward expansion — membership talks began this fall — remains on track but still setting no entry dates.

First, they said, the EU leaders must end by March a fight over how to finance enlargement and slash farm spending which consumes half the EU budget and has escaped even minor cost-cutting since 1957.

Then the EU must reform its housekeeping rules that promise decision-making gridlock when Cyprus and 10 East European nations join. These reforms have been fruitlessly debated for years.

"European integration is a marathon, not a sprint," Romanian President Emil Constantinescu said after he and other eastern leaders met with their EU colleagues.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder remained confident the EU can settle its internal problems by March. His country, France, the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark seek a spending freeze, keeping outlays at 85 billion European currency units (about \$100 billion) in the 2000-2006 period.

Spain and other southerners — seeing EU funds going east at their expense — push for budget growth in line with economic growth, adding some \$24 billion to the EU budget by 2006.

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said that showed rich-poor solidarity. Retorted Schröder: "Germany has no unlimited resources (and) expects the curve of its financial contribution to rise no more but to start pointing downward."

Germany and some of its neighbours pay more into the EU than they get back. They want overpayments — 22 billion marks (\$13 billion) a year in Germany's case — capped somehow.

The EU is no stranger to 11th hour haggling over money and other issues. The resulting image is often one of an outfit that makes things up as it goes along.

After years of preparing for a single currency, the EU leaders argued for 12 hours at a summit in Brussels last May over who should be the European Central Bank chief.

After years of disagreements, the EU will craft a common defence independent from Washington but within NATO. This is supposed to shore up a shaky EU foreign policy, coordinated by someone whose name was not announced here because the EU leaders must yet agree on who it should be.

In 1991, the EU ended duty-free sales by 1999, declaring them incompatible with a single market Europe. Here, the leaders agreed to review and possibly reverse that decision.

The EU wants to enlarge but must still figure out how to finance that. Schroeder spoke of a March deal on farm and budget reforms. French President Jacques Chirac spoke of a deal by June.

The EU wants to enlarge but sets no entry dates saying that will make candidates stop working on economic reforms to get ready for membership.

Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek complained the West Europeans want candidates to be ready for membership fast yet sets no finish line. "This should be done in a parallel way," he complained.

"We haven't heard anything about a timetable (for joining)," Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek said. "In the future it will be necessary." The EU stance upsets Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia the most.

These three are in a slow track to membership but have been scurrying to meet conditions for joining. Despite a recommendation from the EU head office, the EU leaders declined to advance them to the fast negotiating track.

Human rights watchdog calls Hong Kong elections corrupt

HONG KONG (R) — A human rights watchdog described Hong Kong's electoral system Sunday as corrupt and said it effectively gave companies undue influence.

Human Rights Monitor, the Chinese-ruled territory's main independent human rights organisation, made the finding in a report examining Hong Kong's so-called functional constituencies.

In Hong Kong, a proportion of parliamentary seats are set aside for business and professional bodies, including companies.

"Detailed assessment of the small functional constituencies which vote by corporate voting shows them to be even more corrupt than previously thought," the report summary said.

"Multiple registrations of companies belonging to the same commercial organisation is commonplace, and the effect of

this is to give the individuals who control large commercial organisations control over dozens of votes," it added.

Hong Kong held its first election under Chinese rule in May.

Only a third of the 60 seats in the Legislative Council were returned by direct vote. The others were filled by business and professional bodies and a committee of mostly pro-China politicians and businessmen.

Democratic politicians scored a landslide victory in the May poll, winning over 60 per cent of the popular vote.

The report said there was an urgent need for pro-democracy parties to take active steps to bring about full democracy.

"If the development of democracy is simply left to the present Hong Kong government there are strong grounds for believing it will never happen," the report said.

Relief rushed to Philippines storm-hit areas

MANILA (AFP) — Philippine disaster officials Sunday hurried relief to provinces ravaged by Typhoon Faith as more reports of death reached the capital Manila.

"Rescue workers are conducting clearing operations but the damage is minimal compared to the previous typhoons," said Olive Luses, an official at the civil defence office.

"Relief operations are being rushed, especially food assistance." Two more bodies have been fished off the coast of Dumaguete in Negros Oriental Sunday, bringing the death toll to 10, search and rescue volunteers said.

Fifteen other fishermen from the province have also been reported missing since Friday bringing the number of total missing to at least 40 in several central provinces.

"The most we could do now is to recover their bodies," said Eduardo Sibala, chief of the province's civic

volunteer group, stressing that the missing fishermen couldn't possibly have survived the rough seas.

Typhoon Faith, with winds gusting up to 150 kilometres an hour, slammed into a string of islands in the country's central Visayan regions at dawn Friday.

It toppled electric posts, uprooted trees as well as damaged farm crops while its fringe winds whipped southern portions of the country before exiting to the South China Sea and heading towards Vietnam, Manila's weather bureau said.

Civil defence officials said 9,715 persons were affected, including more than 1,300 people who were evacuated.

Damage to agriculture and infrastructure totalled 15.8 million pesos (\$405,000), the civil defence office said. Floods have also subsided in many parts of Manila, where classes were suspended Friday, officials said.

Clashes as Bangladesh opposition enforce strike

DHAKA (AFP) — Police exchanged gun fire and used tear gas in clashes Sunday with strike activists that left 30 people injured as the Bangladesh opposition staged a one-day strike to support its poll rigging claims.

Witnesses said police exchanged gun fire with strike activists for about 30 minutes in Dhaka's suburban Jarabari area, leaving one passerby hospitalised with bullet wounds. Some 10 others received minor injuries.

In another incident in the opposition's stronghold of Nayabazar in the old part of Dhaka, sporadic clashes between police and stone and bomb-throwing activists left 20 others injured.

Police said 150 people were detained during the stoppage that was set to end at 6:00 p.m. (1200 GMT).

"Most will be freed after the strike ends," one police official said.

News reports said at least 30 people were injured late Saturday in clashes between pro- and anti-strike activists in western Pabna district, where the by-elections were held, and in northern Rangpur dis-

trict. Five men were also injured late Saturday after a crude bomb they were making exploded in Dhaka's downtown area, police said Sunday.

Rival student groups at the Dhaka University campus exchanged gun fire briefly and exploding crude bombs, but none were injured, witnesses said.

There were no immediate reports of violence elsewhere in Bangladesh.

The opposition has demanded the resignation of the head of the election commission after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Awami League's ruling Awami League won parliamentary by-elections. Monitors and some commentators said the charges of vote-rigging were groundless.

Life slowly returned to normal as the strike neared its end with vehicles operating and businesses opening.

The seven-party opposition alliance led by Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) called for the nationwide strike to protest its claims of vote fraud in the crucial by-election to the Pabna-2

constituency held Thursday.

Zia called on her supporters to enforce the strike, and said "the Chief Election Commissioner must resign and be replaced by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court."

"You should resign immediately as you have failed to maintain neutrality on several occasions," she was quoted by dailies as saying Saturday to welcome new party members.

The commissioner Abu Hena was not available for comment.

Abu Sayeed, the publicity secretary of the Awami League and also state minister for information, challenged the BNP to prove its charges and said "calling the strike after the election was showing disrespect to people's verdict and democracy... it is condemnable."

Sheikh Hasina at a rally outside Dhaka dismissed the BNP's claims of vote fraud, saying "people do not want to see vote-thieves come back to power again," a reference to the BNP which was in power between 1991-96.

Sunday's strike was

enforced days after business leaders urged an end to political strikes called by both sides in recent years in one of Asia's poorest countries, still recovering from devastating floods.

After last week's rare joint statement by 11 top business leaders against strikes, two major trade organisations made fresh appeals Sunday.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the country's largest foreign exchange earning group, said political parties must create an atmosphere to help industrialisation and development.

Abdul Awal Minto, chief of the apex Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said he was "concerned" by the frequent stoppages and would start an anti-strike campaign.

The strike "does not have any logical ground as the polling in Pabna by-election was free and fair," he told the Bangladesh Observer daily.

The government estimates daily losses from strike action at four billion taka (\$83 million).

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Inclined to statehood

WHETHER THE U.S. presidential jet, Air Force One, lands at Gaza International Airport or not will be of little significance compared to President Bill Clinton himself addressing the session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). The president's visit, something that the Israeli leadership wishes to erase from the minds of its own people, appears to have two main objectives.

By witnessing the PNC abolish the articles in the Palestinian National Charter, Clinton will be witness to the removal of the last obstacle that the Israelis place in the way of a reciprocal recognition of Palestinian rights. While a few Palestinian leaders meet in Damascus to keep the grand dream of a totally-liberated Palestine alive and a few Israelis, notably in the West Bank settlements, cling to the absurd idea of a greater Israel, the majority of Palestinians and Israelis realise in the end that Palestine/Israel has to be shared, by two peoples, two states.

By addressing the representatives of the Palestinian people, President Clinton is telling the Israeli leadership that the U.S. is coming much closer to the recognition of the Palestinians' right to a state of their own. This American inclination has become increasingly obvious in recent years and especially in recent statements made by President Clinton himself.

Yet, the U.S. leader will leave Palestine and the region as soon as he ends his mission and will go back to his country to face his own troubles and in two years he will leave the political scene altogether.

In two or 20 years we Jordanians, Palestinians, Arabs and Israelis will still be here, and the problems we will face then will be dependent on what we decide now.

If the Palestinians are willing to pull back their dream, and if Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority are willing to crack down on the opponents of peace, shouldn't Benjamin Netanyahu and like-minded Israelis reciprocate? Shouldn't they abandon their greater Israel scheme and stop building settlements and confiscating land and antagonising the Palestinians?

The Israeli leadership should listen carefully to whatever President Clinton is going to say today in Gaza, and we hope that they recognise that the majority of the Palestinians and Arabs want to live in peace with Israel.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said greater effort is needed to convince the Jordanian public of the value of the privatisation process and the private sector's ability in management, production and marketing. Businessmen are more capable of managing economic projects and achieving better results than government employees, Fanek claimed. He added that in order to decide whether to accept privatisation or not, a number of questions have to be answered: Does privatisation improve management and investment? Does it improve the financial situation of the Kingdom's treasury and economy? What are privatisation's social and general effects on consumers, employees and job creation? What are the possible ways to privatise? the writer asked. If these questions get objective and actual answers, the truth will come out.

Al Dustour's editorial said that ahead of President Clinton's historic visit to the Palestinian self-rule territories and the recent negative developments in the Wye River accord, Jordan took the decision to provide support and assistance to its Palestinian brothers. Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh's trip to the Palestinian territories includes several dimensions of the Kingdom's support, namely His Majesty King Hussein's role at the Wye Plantation in October. Jordan considers the peace process' success a national-regional interest, thus it provides any possible support to remove obstacles facing the process. Israeli stubborn policies threatening the peace process are actually forming a challenge to both the Jordanian and Palestinian nations. Tarawneh's move was evidence of Jordan's firm position towards Palestinians and against such Israeli actions.

Economic Review

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Are you for globalisation?

"ARE YOU for globalisation (the globalisation of Jordan that is)?" That was the question posed to me last week during a workshop sponsored by the Friedrich Neumann Foundation in which I had presented some reflections on the challenges and risks that are facing Jordan in its globalisation drive. The simplicity of the question and the required retrospection and honesty in answering it prompted this article.

But before addressing the question itself, it is nations where business engage globalisation. It is the economic interdependence of nations where businesses engage more and more in international trade and rely not only on the products they purchase from foreign nations but also on the foreign markets in which they sell their products. This, basic economic theory predicts, creates a win-win situation; however, more advanced theories present several scenarios that one should become aware of and they are not all so rosy. For example, there is the big country model where the large country dominates trade and directs the benefits of trade in their entirety to maximise the welfare of its factors and resources. There is the challenge associated with dumping and trade abuses where intra-industry trade is dictated by the requirements of the large manufacturer and his surplus-

es, regardless of the small producers in another country. There is also the small country scenario where benefits or harm that may evolve from the strategic actions of a large trading block are more than proportionately magnified due to the size of the small economies which causes threatening instabilities. The oligopolistic (competition among few large strategically interdependent suppliers) case where the outcome is strategic and depends upon the actions and reactions of the market players. In fact there is a plethora of solutions that make, in their total, a not so naive image or outcome of free trade. Hence the answer that free trade is beneficial to all is not always true.

At any rate, according to our definition, globalisation means greater global interdependence and the formation of global alliances and trade partnerships for Jordan. The recent free trade agreement with Egypt is one among a string of free trade agreements that Jordan has entered into with the aim of moving closer into full membership in the global village. These agreements include the agreements signed with the European Union (signed Nov. 24, 1997), European Free Trade Area (negotiations only recently started), Libya, Bahrain, Syria, the Arab League, the United States (through the Qualifying Industrial Zones Agreement signed recently) and

many other trade cooperation treaties. In addition, Jordan is expected to become a full member of the World Trade Organisation, the successor to GATT, by the year 2000.

But Jordan is a small economy; its trade deficit is over two billion dollars, which represents a significant chunk of its GNP and poses a constant threat to its balance of payments and current account. Therefore, efforts aimed only at the creation of free trade with the rest of the world while maintaining the status quo will not be to Jordan's advantage. Such effort must also be accompanied by conscious efforts to improve a host of conditions that contribute to making and improving the standards of any Jordanian product; otherwise it will be like throwing an amateur boxer into the ring with Mike Tyson, which would be foolish. In other words, if you want to globalise you must work hard at creating a competitive mindset among consumers and industrialists. Therefore, there are many actions that are economically required (such as the implementation of the full economic reform programme) with the freeing of trade in order to globalise safely and fruitfully.

Moreover, if Jordan is to move correctly toward globalisation it is to do so in a transparent and institutional manner before, during and

after the process. A transparent institutional approach guarantees that the private sector marches in step with the public sector and in turn helps to create stronger, more suitable trade agreements. Otherwise, with the private sector alienated, a vicious cycle starts as unilateral free trade replaces bilateral free trade and globalisation becomes a means for the dissipation of industry and displacement of management, capital and labour.

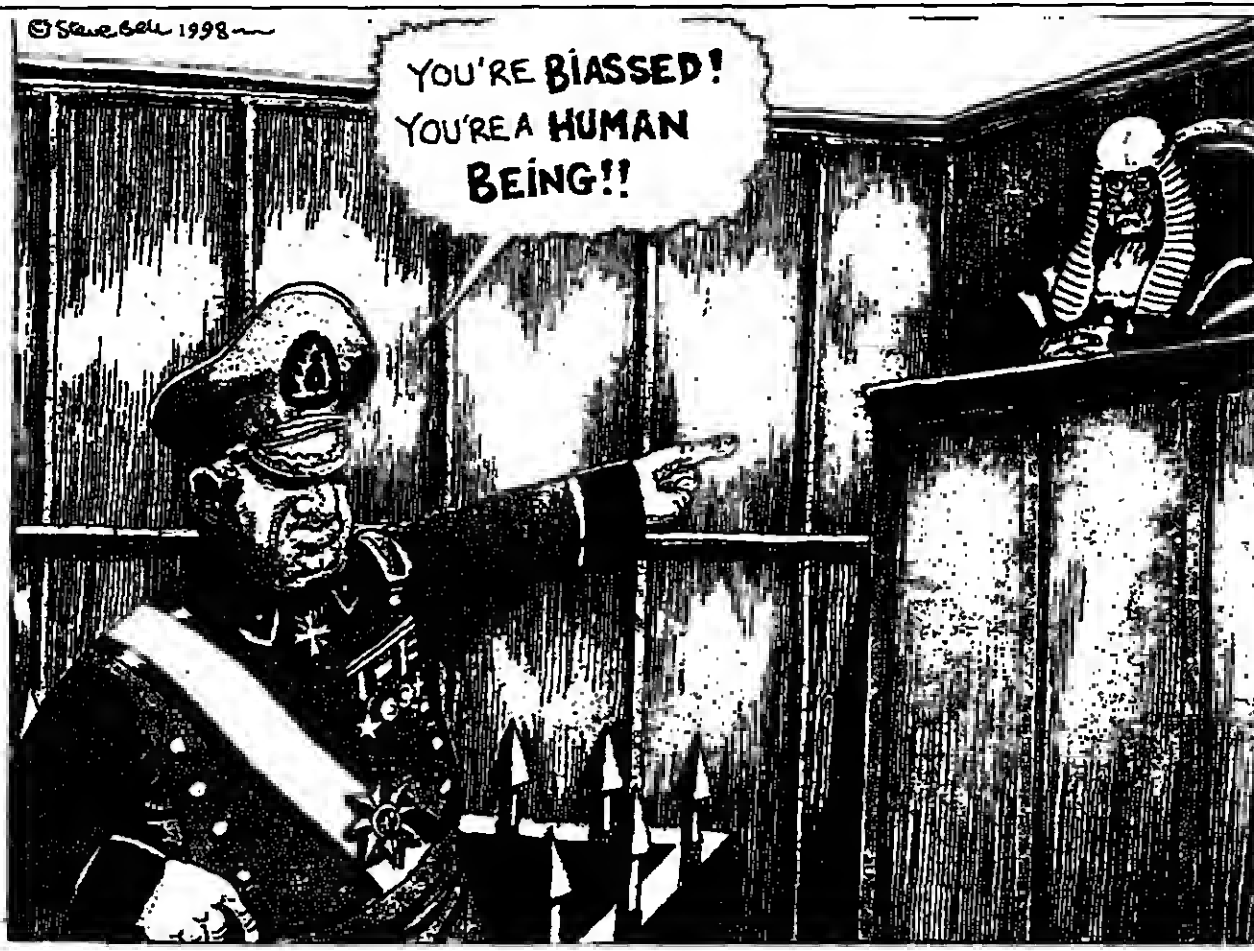
Small countries like Jordan have to operate from within larger trade blocks such as the Arab market. This improves Jordan's bargaining power and provides it with the necessary leverage to command better conditions in negotiations. In fact this is sound advice to all Arab countries as they globalise. Thus, a movement by a single country toward globalisation must be coordinated with other small countries to increase the likelihood of a win-win situation instead of zero sum game.

While current talk focuses on trade in goods, it is trade in services — particularly the flow of foreign capital — that is more important. Since World War II the number of stock markets has grown from 50 to 125 — even the Chinese have sought to establish a stock market. These markets are demanded by all, because they provide liquidity; and the more the merrier, or so they

think. However, investors see liquidity as a way to shorten their decision-making time horizon by providing them with the ability to reverse a decision very quickly with very little transaction cost. Thus, foreign investors can quickly provide foreign capital and deepen that financial markets of a developing country. However, at the same time, they can just as quickly bring such markets to total ruin.

It is, therefore, not surprising that developing countries are rethinking their capital flow regimes to make them more controlled and less vulnerable to panic and the bandwagon mentalities of foreign investors. Such a mentality was exemplified in the debacles of the South and South East Asian economies where investors fled at the first sign of a crisis, causing Asian hardships to snowball to global disaster. In this respect Jordan is still safe: foreign investors have shied away from all of the Arab stock markets with the exception of Egypt and Morocco (most likely due to high privatisation activity).

Countries that are globalising should categorise their challenges into two categories: a short-run challenge, which is stability, and a long-run challenge, which is development. For Jordan to win the two, both the private and public sector must work hand in hand and be fully cognisant of all that entails.



Pinochet's end

By Gwynne Dyer

"I am not an outstanding student, but I read a lot, especially history. And history teaches you that dictators never end up well."

— Augusto Pinochet

ONE DAY short of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, British Home Secretary Jack Straw made the defining decision of his career. By not overruling the House of Lords decision two weeks ago that General Augusto Pinochet is liable to extradition to Spain for human rights violations, Straw has made it quite likely that the former Chilean dictator will never see Chile again.

His decision is more far-reaching than that, for even Britain's highest court can only make judgements about the law. Jack Straw represents the British state, which by long tradition sees itself and other states as exempt from ordinary laws — and one of the most important of those exemptions is the rule that former heads of state are immune from prosecution for acts committed in execution of their function.

In other words, if you are a head of state you can be tried for murdering your wife's lover, but not for murdering your political opponents. Even countries like Britain, where it is not customary to murder political opponents, normally observe this rule in order to defend the sacred principle of 'sovereignty'.

That was the position of Lord Lloyd, who voted last month to release Pinochet because "it has not been suggested that he was personally guilty of any of the crimes of torture and hostage-taking in the sense that he carried them out with his own hands."

Lord Steyn, who voted against freeing the general, retorted that by the same logic Hitler's order for the extermination of the European Jews "must be regarded as an official act deriving from his function as head of state, and therefore would have

been immune from prosecution."

Lord Nicholls concurred: "Certain types of conduct, including torture and hostage-taking, are not acceptable conduct on the part of anyone. This applies as much to heads of state, or even more so, as it does to everyone else."

The post-World War II Nuremberg and Tokyo trials applied that revolutionary principle to Nazi and Japanese war criminals, but they were singular events that seemed to leave no legacy. More recently, the tribunals on Bosnia and Rwanda made the perpetrators of those genocides subject to international judgement, but they too remained exceptions. Jack Straw's decision makes all ex-dictators who murdered or tortured their citizens liable for their crimes.

First, of course, they must travel somewhere that cares about such things, and dares to prosecute them. So former Haitian dictator Raoul Cedras can safely go on touring the jazz bars of Panama City; ex-Ugandan tyrant Idi Amin will continue to receive a pension from the Saudi government; and deposed Ethiopian strongman Mengistu Haile Mariam will go on trying the patience of his host, Zimbabwean strongman Robert Mugabe, with his huge phone bills.

Besides, old-fashioned ex-dictators are a diminishing problem on the global stage as democracy becomes the norm, and some of them have a pretty rough time of it anyway. Argentina's General Leopoldo Galtieri, who launched and lost the Falklands War, works as a janitor in his run-down Buenos Aires apartment block. 'Baby Doc' Duvalier's high-maintenance wife Michelle ran through most of his money and then ran off with a neighbour on France's Cote d'Azur, leaving him so broke that he had to move into a humble apartment.

Pinochet matters more than these irrelevant has-beens because he seemed to have got away with it. He overthrew the government in a country that hadn't had a coup for generations, he had thousands tortured and killed, and he ruled by decree for 17 years. But he left Chile in good shape eco-

nomically, he wrote his own amnesty, and even after retiring as army commander early this year he continued to intimidate Chile's democratically elected rulers.

So it's good for Chile that Pinochet will probably spend the next few years facing court charges in foreign countries, even if the Chilean government must say otherwise in public to mollify the military. "The country is no longer polarised," said Jose Zalaquett, a member of Chile's 1991 Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "I don't see any chance of a new coup. Some army extremists could create problems or plant bombs, but that is all."

And it's good for the world that even 'successful' ex-dictators like Pinochet must sometimes answer for their actions. Nothing terrible will happen to Pinochet even if he is eventually found guilty of torture and genocide by a Spanish court: Spanish law forbids the jailing of people over 75 years old, and Pinochet is already 83. But he will be out of circulation for years, and he may well die in exile.

All this may make potential dictators elsewhere more cautious about abusing human rights, but that's not the main point. It is that the world's moral climate has changed so much that even a conservative, 'family values' politician like Jack Straw (who claims to have worn a tie every day at university) has no choice but to concede that even heads of state are not above the law.

Straw probably hates the decision he has made. The British Foreign Office certainly hates it, as do diplomats everywhere. Jose Maria Aznar's centre-right government in Spain privately deplores the enterprising initiative of Judge Baltasar Garzon, who had the bright idea of demanding Pinochet's extradition in the first place, and has been praying that Straw would send Pinochet home.

It doesn't matter. They were all trapped, once Garzon set the process in motion, for public opinion at home and abroad would not tolerate Pinochet's escape. It is a great victory for international law, and a great defeat for the tradition of absolute sovereignty.

The role of the media and tourism

To the editor:

THERE IS no doubt that one of the main factors jeopardising the potential for tourism growth in this region is violence or the fear of it emanating from the Arab-Israeli dispute in the Middle East, prospects of renewed military confrontation in the Gulf, and the armed insurgency in some North African states.

And while it is the role of the media to keep the world informed about the happenings in the region, there is a growing perception that many in the foreign media, knowingly or unknowingly, are damaging the potential for tourism growth through a crisis coverage of events in a way that contributes to an exaggeration of the situation to a point detrimental not only to tourism in the country concerned with any particular event, but also to neighbouring states and in some cases, the entire region.

The constant stereotyping of people in the region, the gross generalisations, uninformed hasty judgements, sensational coverage and sweeping statements carried by many in the media are responsible for the extent of damage incurred to the tourism industry throughout the region. The failure of such a media to describe events within their real context, have further exacerbated the problem.

Terms and headlines used by the media such as "Crisis in the Middle East" to describe a violent incident in a small town in Israel or Palestine, the generalisations and stereotyping such as the use of Arab to describe a Palestinian, a Lebanese, a Jordanian and a Moroccan etc., leaves in the minds of many an impression that particular events go beyond borders and lumps the entire region and its peoples together and brands it violent-stricken, with no consideration to the different realities in different states among different people.

We keep hearing TV and radio news broadcasts beginning with sentences like: "Once again, the Middle East is plunged into a new cycle of violence," when in fact the commentator is only referring to an incident in one village and in one state which has no bearing on the rest of the region.

We have headlines like "Showdown in the Gulf," when what is meant is a possible confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq, which does not necessarily have any bearing on the security situation in a dozen other countries in the region. Violent groups in a particular country are often described as "Muslim terrorists" instead of calling them by their own name and defining their particular nationality and causes, not to mention the labelling of the Muslim religion as a whole as a violent religion when in fact religion has nothing to do with it. Has anybody in Europe ever heard the German terrorist organisation "Bader Meinhof" called "Christian terrorists"?

What we need is a more responsible media which says it as it is without stereotyping and lumping the entire region and its people together whenever a crisis strikes a particular point in the region. We need a media that abandons sensationalism which is only aimed at attracting more audiences to their news broadcasts and increase its ratings. We also need a media that puts things into perspective so that the rest of the world does not think that people in this part of the world have nothing to do but kill each other on daily basis.

There is a need for establishing a system of cooperation between governments in the region on the one hand and the international media on the other, so that the damage caused by occasional violence is kept within its real perspective. This could be done by each state on its own with the media accredited to each state, and it can also be done on a regional level. Seminars and workshops on the subject with the participation of government representatives, media professionals and tourism experts could go a long way towards achieving understanding and cooperation on the way of limiting the damage currently caused by media crisis coverage that leaves the world with the impression that violence awaits visitors of our region.

I don't think anybody abroad would believe us now if we told them that more people die of road accidents in Israel alone every year than those who die as a result of political violence in the entire Middle East!

Moreover, I believe that one should reiterate the importance of travel and tourism writers and correspondents in promoting regional destinations. In this context, there is a need for specialised tourism publications that would carry the latest news and developments within the region and in an effort to attract more visitors to explore and enjoy this region's unique touristic attractions, indigenous cultures, scenic and pollution-free nature in addition to our traditional oriental hospitality and delicious cuisine.

Nicolas N. Sabanegh
 Chairman
 Arab Federation of Travel Agents Association
 Amman

A free media or an 'orchestration of lies and deception'?

Western media's near total dependence on commercial enterprises for their livelihood is threatening free speech and the public right to know, says Cees Hemlink, director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights in Holland

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — The Third World has always looked to Western countries as paragons of free speech and information, but Western media, says Cees Hemlink, director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights in Holland, is not all it's cracked up to be.

"There is so little media independence these days," says Hemlink. "[People in the West] always thought that the role of the media would be to set some distance from the powers that be and report on them, be [those powers] governments or private companies. That's no longer happening."

Hemlink, who recently spoke at the Jerusalem media conference hosted in Amman, can recite a near catalogue of examples in which commercial enterprise has threatened to drown both free speech and the public right to know by exploiting the media's near total dependence on commercial enterprises for their livelihood or due to the sheer economic authority of multinational corporations.

In Hemlink's own country, for example, a Dutch daily newspaper was forced to drop a story on the poor maintenance of Singapore Airlines aircraft after the airline threatened to withdraw a regular, full page monthly advertisement. A German friend, he says, recently asked the German Der Spiegel why it had not given any coverage to the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), an international agreement that will totally deregulate the investment of multinational corporations.

"The answer he got was that 'It would be bad for advertising revenues,'" he said.

In Britain, the BBC two years ago was forced to drop a story on the fast food industry after McDonald's threatened to sue the BBC "into its last days," according to Hemlink.

In the United States, he points out, NBC, a premiere American television network is now owned by General Electric, one of the largest defence contractors for the U.S. government. If one thinks about the Gulf war, Hemlink says, one can form a general picture of the role

major corporations can play in the news we see and hear, or never see and never hear, for that matter.

"During the Gulf war, there were marvellous reports about the missiles, their sophistication, their accuracy," says Hemlink, in an interview with the Jordan Times on the sidelines of the Jerusalem Media Conference Culture and Communication: a Global Information Society. "These were all commercial messages for General Electric. Considering that they own NBC, it becomes unthinkable for an NBC journalist to make a critical report of the Gulf war, or American military intervention and defence systems, doesn't it?"

"If companies are taking these positions even against media organisations like the BBC, it doesn't take to see what can happen to smaller media enterprises," says Hemlink.

NBC recently entered into a deal with IBM to promote and use each other's resources whenever possible, which precludes any opportunity for any NBC journalist to critically discuss any aspect of IBM but of the computer industry as a whole, he says. And ABC, another leading network, owned by Walt Disney Studios, closed a similar deal with fast food giant McDonald's. You can bet, he says, that it won't be ABC to tell you what you eat in your Big Mac or to discuss McDonald's business ethics on the ABC network.

On the sidelines of the conference hosted last month, an editor of a Jordanian daily lamented that for many countries, commercial media is a luxury that journalists in the developing world — where the media is more often than not state-owned and state run — can only dream about.

"Don't make that mistake," says Hemlink. "If you exchange state controlled media to commercial media, you move from one monopoly to another. It doesn't really make a difference if you are controlled by a government or by a corporation."

Implicit in the corporate take over of the media is a pattern of a subtle use of media to impart the hard sell, rather than information, says Hemlink. The end result is a blurring of the line between information and

advertisement.

"Go to cinema feature films. They are all sponsored by commercial companies that use the films to promote their products," he says. "The actors are wearing Nike and drinking Coca Cola. James Bond in his latest movie drove a rental car."

In the pages of newspapers and magazines and on television, he says, "infomercials" pose as legitimate news, and without a disclaimer stating that such "new items" are actual advertisements, people find it increasingly difficult to determine whether what they are reading is an independent account of events or a commercial message.

"My worry is that this may not be such an issue in a country like Jordan," Hemlink says. "But one should not sit back in a leisurely way and say 'It doesn't affect me.' The commercial message is one of growing importance."

It is also one of widening scope. In the Western world, escaping the commercial message is nearly impossible. It's everywhere: on TV, in the newspapers, in streetcars and subways, in toilet stalls, at the bus stop and in the once sacred territory of higher learning institutions — universities. In some cities, brilliant digital billboards are enough to stop traffic dead in its tracks.

Children, he says, are the new market and are already targeted at the rate of 20,000 commercials per year by the time they are seven years of age, and this phenomenon promises to become worse.

"I recall a commercial in the U.S. that talked just to kids and told them, 'Make sure your parents aren't in the room. Now, tell them to buy this! It's become outrageous,'" he says. "I fear that my children will have advertising in their school text books someday in the not so distant future."

The increasingly corporate influence over the media is tantamount, he says, to a "smogging up" of each of our cultural environments, and we all seem to accept it.

"If people buy a product and it doesn't work, they know what to do with it: they take it to the shop or go to their lawyer or return it to the factory," he says. "Why shouldn't we be as

critical of the funny intangible things that are thrown at us daily — violence, pornography, lies. We don't complain. We show people that we accept it."

"I think its peculiar because people worry immensely about the natural environment, but the cultural environment in which people live and children grow up is as important as the natural one," he says. "It must have a certain quality. Its detrimental if it loses its diversity."

Hemlink is currently on a mission to measure how much, in fact, whether or not, people care about their cultural environment, spearheading a campaign to collect signatures for the "People's Communication Charter," a document now travelling the world to collect signatures.

The Charter's 18 articles are not extraordinary, Hemlink says, and include all the relevant expressions of a person's right to receive and impart information and ideas. The document itself is special, he says, because it was not drafted by governments or the United Nations, but by civil organisations and social movements around the world.

The charter itself is seeking a campaign — a sort of Greenpeace for the cultural environment.

"I am asking people if they care," says Hemlink. "Do you care about the quality of information that you receive? Do you care about what your children receive? Do you care that the media played a major role in the genocide in Rwanda? Only everyday people have the answer to these questions."

Hemlink says the charter was inspired by media coverage of the Gulf war, which he describes as "an enormous orchestration of lies and deception."

"The media did the propaganda for the allied forces," says Hemlink. "People in various movements started talking about this and found it remarkable that no one complained about this. Millions and millions of people who were misled by the massive censorship of the Pentagon, and most people seemed to accept that. I find that worrying."

Ideally, Hemlink hopes that the charter

would lead to a nongovernmental international tribunal where people can go to complain that their right to free expression, their right not to be censored or their right to receive accurate information has been abridged. In reality, he says, a tribunal could probably never be legally binding, but could act, for example, as an international consumer society on the media and its controlling force, publishing annual or specialised reports on violations of the public right to be informed at the hands of corporate world.

In the meantime, he urges that consumers of information have to draw on their own creative energy to demand higher standards of what they are "fed" by the media: a daunting prospect considering the size and strength of the adversaries.

Consumers need not feel outclassed by corporate world, he says.

"There are still dozens of possibilities to retain the independence of your newspapers," Hemlink says, citing the story of a German readership that forced a commercial grocery chain to abandon its attempt to gag the press.

The grocery chain had pressured a leading German newspaper, in which the chain advertised frequently, to fire its correspondent in South Africa who had written critical exposés on German investment in that country where the chain had an interest. The editor had been prepared to comply.

"People in the correspondent's community in Germany tried to boycott the newspaper, which had no effect," recalls Hemlink. "Then they did something very clever. They focused on the major advertisers and found that the grocery was the interest exerting the pressure. They launched a massive boycott against that chain and were successful. It shows that people are more powerful than they tend to believe."

Admittedly, he says, forcing a truthful and transparent media sounds easier than it is.

"It needs an incredible amount of mobilisation and energy," says Hemlink. "But people have to wake up. Indifference is the real threat to democracy, not corrupt governments or evil companies. The question is: Do you care?"

Health

AIDS reaches epidemic proportions as the hunt for a cure intensifies

AIDS explosion hangs over Ukraine

By Pavel Polityuk

Reuters

SERHIY SAT by the window in his small, empty apartment in the rundown Soviet-era outskirts of Odessa, a wary and forlorn figure in the autumn twilight.

"Everybody avoids me but please don't you be afraid of me — you can't get AIDS from just sitting here," said the 26-year-old drug addict and AIDS victim, his eyes lighting up at the arrival of his first guests in weeks.

Serhiy is one of the 36,000 people officially registered in Ukraine as carrying HIV, the virus which leads to AIDS. Already in the later stages of full-blown AIDS, he may have just weeks to live and fears hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians will share his fate unless youngsters are made aware of the risk.

His home city lies at the heart of the problem.

The Black Sea port's graceful 19th century centre of vine-bung balconies and lacy acacia trees belie what officials say is its dubious status as home

to more than a third of the HIV sufferers in the former Soviet republic of 50 million.

They add that the official figure of 36,000 HIV cases masks a much greater epidemic. "For every officially registered person there are a minimum of 10 unregistered," said Oleh Penin, head of Odessa's government-run regional AIDS centre.

Even more disturbing are United Nations estimates that Ukraine has the fastest growing rate of HIV infection in the whole of Europe — and that 1.5 million Ukrainians could be affected by the disease by 2010.

"While by no means is the number of cases in Ukraine the highest of countries around the world, the growth in numbers is quite troublesome," said Carol Bellamy, the head of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), on a visit to Ukraine in October.

"In order for it not to get totally out of hand there really needs to be very significant action taken now." As a microcosm of the rest of Ukraine, Odessa is struggling to come to terms with the enormity of the problem

which it faces, still uncertain even of its root causes.

In the economically uncertain and, for many, desperate aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union, the city's significant drug culture is already a main object of suspicion.

"We are at the centre of an epidemic but it is very difficult even for experts to understand the terrible scale of it," Penin said.

"Maybe it is because there are a lot of colleges here and foreign students transmitted the virus, but I am sure it really started when drugs began being taken in syringes." The health ministry says about 80 per cent of Ukrainians infected with HIV or AIDS are intravenous drug users, who picked up the virus through sharing infected needles.

That figure compares to about only 20 per cent of sufferers infected in the rest of the world through syringes, Penin said.

It is in line, however, with figures in neighbouring Russia and other former Soviet states, which were shielded from the early stages of the global AIDS epidemic by communist isolationism.

The scale of Odessa's drug problem is apparent as soon as one steps outside Serhiy's building into the wasteland of muddy buildings, vandalised children's playgrounds and rickety garages which make up the high-rise dormitory suburb of Kotovskoho.

A constant stream of people shuffles its way along a criss-cross of muddy trails to a village two kilometres away. This is the heart of Odessa's drug business.

Its mafia-style culture has earned it the name Palermo — no one recalls any other name. Crunching used syringes underfoot, many push babies in prams or lead toddlers by the hand. Some carry kitchen utensils to barter for drugs.

"You can hide drugs from the police in prams or in a school satchel," explained Yevhen, an addict of five years. "This field is the border between life and drugs." Of Palermo's 52 houses, 49 produce the low-grade opium solution known locally as shirka, to which Serhiy and thousands of others are addicted.

The U.N. agency UNAIDS forecast

AIDS could cause about 1.8 million deaths in Ukraine by 2016, if the country does not take major steps to combat AIDS soon.

Yet for now most of Ukraine remains in deep denial of the problem, despite some signs of progress since the country's first case of HIV infection was recorded in 1987.

An AIDS awareness radio and TV advertisement campaign plays in the capital Kiev. Serhiy himself spends most of his time writing educational brochures about AIDS and drug addiction.

But, living with his mother who earns \$30 a month as a teacher, Serhiy says he could not get a job without concealing his condition and would be liable to arrest if he did that.

"If I told anybody I had AIDS, my life would be worth nothing," he said. He has precious little time left as it is — his teeth are falling out, he has only 10 per cent of his vision left and he has little hope that doctors would treat a growing abscess on his neck if he told them about his fatal condition.

"Nobody would touch a person with AIDS. I have no doubt at all that

doctors would not treat me," he said. "I've three months left maximum and I understand that." Ukraine has joined forces with UNICEF and UNAIDS to fight the drugs and AIDS epidemic.

Penin said he was confident attitudes would one day approach those in the West, where official campaigns are beginning to pay off after a decade or more of effort in the form of slowing infection rates and more social tolerance of HIV sufferers.

He denied that Ukrainians with AIDS were discriminated against. "Ukraine follows world standards in how it deals with people with AIDS," Penin said. "We are convinced that any persecution of those people is inadmissible. But Serhiy feels time is running out not just for him."

"Boys of 10 and 12 years old are experimenting with drugs right now and I'm afraid that very soon there will be no healthy people left," he said.

"My life is near its end but I see with horror that thousands of other people are also moving to their deaths — and we are just the first wave."

Harvard scientists 'see' how HIV resists drugs

By Maggie Fox

Reuters

SCIENTISTS SAID last Thursday they had been able to "see" the changes that let the AIDS virus become resistant to drugs and hope their images can help drug companies develop better ways to attack the virus.

Stephen Harrison and colleagues at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Harvard University were able to crystallise and make an image of the reverse transcriptase enzyme that HIV uses to replicate itself.

They caught the virus just after it has attacked a cell and used an instrument known as a synchrotron, which is a high-intensity, high-energy X-ray crystallography machine, to image the scene.

Reverse transcriptase is targeted by five HIV drugs now on the market, from the original drug, Glaxo-Wellcome's ZIDOVUDINE (AZT), to Bristol-Myers Squibb's Virex (ddI).

They work by mimicking nucleotides, natural building blocks of DNA in the cell. These nucleotides are used by the HIV virus as it attacks a cell and injects its own genetic material into it, thus forcing the cell to pump out copies of virus instead of dividing naturally.

Such an approach has worked fairly well. Combined with drugs that attack the virus at a different stage of its cycle, known as protease inhibitors, the drugs can suppress the viral infection in many patients.

There is also a class of drugs known as non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs), which also affect reverse transcriptase but in different ways from the nucleoside mimickers, known formally as nucleoside-analogue reverse transcriptase inhibitors.

But HIV eventually mutates in many people and becomes resistant to drugs.

Drug researchers have found that seeing the physical structure of drugs and their biological targets can help them design compounds that will work together. Many fit together physically, like a lock and key.

Harrison's team confirmed that the virus mutates in specific ways that allow it to, in effect, ignore the drugs.

"The clustering of the mutations correlates with the chemical structure of the drug," they wrote in a report in the journal Science.

The X-ray crystallography technique helped them to see the physical structures. "It allows you to see every amino acid, indeed every protein, in an atom," Harrison said in a telephone interview.

Other scientists have found that the

reverse transcriptase enzyme of HIV has parts, or domains, referred to as "fingers," "palm," "thumb" and "connection." These are used by the enzyme to seize hold of the nucleoside much in the way a human hand grasps something.

"If you hold your hand out with the palm cupped, that's a crude description of the overall shape of the protein," Harrison said.

The HIV reverse transcriptase enzyme uses one particular nucleoside to copy its genetic material and start the victim cell down the road to becoming a miniature virus factory.

"We've captured this enzyme in the act of copying a viral gene," Harrison said. As it does this, the "fingers" curl in toward the "palm." Not only could Harrison's team see this process, they could see the changes in the amino acids that make up the protein that confer resistance to each drug.

"It allows us to understand and rationalise the resistance," he said. "A major and annoying puzzle had been ... that we had been unable to understand why those particular mutations had conferred resistance." Now that they understand, he said, perhaps better drugs could be designed, and existing drugs could be used more effectively.

Group accelerates search for AIDS vaccine

By Patricia Reaney

Reuters

AN INTERNATIONAL group devoted to finding an effective AIDS vaccine last week launched two research and development partnerships to speed up the search.

The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), a New York-based independent non-profit organisation, said it was investing \$9.1 million in two research projects working on vaccines against the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

Seu Berkley, the president of IAVI, said the two new vaccine technologies were among the most promising in the world and offered the best chance of fighting the disease that has infected 33.4 million people worldwide.

"We need a much wider vaccine pipeline," he told a news conference. "Only a vaccine has any chance of ending the global epidemic." Anti-retroviral drugs have prolonged the lives of sufferers in the West but the drugs are too expensive for most people in the developing world where 95 per cent of all HIV patients now live.

Berkley emphasised the importance

of getting several vaccine projects up and rolling simultaneously because it will take at least five to seven years before scientists know if one works.

Both partnership agreements, he added, involve provisions to ensure that the benefits of the research are available in the developing world.

The two research projects were deemed the best vaccine candidates by a team of experts on IAVI's scientific advisory committee.

"They are far enough along in the development process that we should be able to test them quickly in humans," said Dr. Jaap Goudsmid, the chairman of the committee.

The Oxford-Nairobi project, led by Professor Andrew McMichael of Oxford University and J.J. Bwayo of the University of Nairobi, is developing two vaccines designed to act together.

Researchers hope the combination will stimulate the killer T-cells in the immune system to fight the HIV virus.

Both vaccines are from strains of the HIV virus in Kenya.

There are several different strains around the world.

"The idea is to get the T-cells up and

running before the virus takes hold," said McMichael.

He told the news conference he hopes to begin the first trials on 10 British volunteers in about a year. If all goes well there will be follow-up trials in Kenya.

The second project is a collaboration between scientists at the University of Capetown and the Medical Research Council of South Africa and AlphaVax Corp. in Durham, North Carolina.

Their vaccine will be based on strains of the virus from South Africa. Until now most vaccine candidates have been based on strains in North America and Europe.

Berkley said that despite years of research only one vaccine has moved into efficacy trials in the United States. Although dozens of potential vaccines are being tested only AIDS-VAX is in human trials.

IAVI, which was formed two years ago to advance progress in vaccines against AIDS, plans to launch up to six vaccine projects. It is supported by the British government, the National AIDS Trust in Britain, UNAIDS, the World Bank and private and corporate funding.

Lebanon's new government seeks to boost economy

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's new Prime Minister Selim Al Hoss Saturday forecast public debt to reach around \$18 billion by end of 1998 up from \$16.63 billion announced at end of October.

But Hoss, a veteran economist and politician, outlined steps to boost the economy which varied from curbing budget deficit to privatisation plans and cutting interest rates.

Hoss did not give reasons behind the public debt increase but a financial source said Lebanon's most recent \$450 million Eurobond issue had appeared in November's public debt figures and could partly explain the increase.

"The public debt will reach around \$18 billion by the end of this year. The main reason behind the debt is the budget deficit," Hoss said during a meeting with reporters.

"The public debt is more than the GDP (gross domestic product). The percentage of the public debt to GDP is 110 per cent," he said.

Previous estimates put the public debt as equal to GDP.

Curbing the public debt and bringing it to levels below the GDP is what Lebanon needs to reduce

the budget deficit and debt servicing, said Hoss.

The budget deficit forecast at 42 per cent of expenditure in 1998 is closely watched by foreign investors and rating agencies. It reached 59 per cent of expenditure in 1997.

The deficit was the biggest challenge facing the former government of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and was inherited by Hoss, who was appointed nearly two weeks ago.

Lebanon borrowed heavily from the local market and tapped international markets to fund rebuilding the country after its destructive 1975-1990 civil war.

According to central bank statistics, Lebanon's net public debt stood at \$25,955.5 billion pounds (\$16.63 billion) at the end of October of which the domestic debt was \$18,922 billion pounds.

Hoss said his technocrat 16-member government would consider cutting the high interest rates on Lebanese pound deposits that have hindered much-needed private investment in the country.

"High interest rates hamper the activity of the national economy and this is one of the reasons behind the economic recession in Lebanon.

High interest rates make investors hesitate before getting engaged in private investments," he said.

"Our target should be reducing interest rates as much as we can but this should be without hurting the monetary position and the financial policy," he said.

The new cabinet would build up to the previous government's policy of stabilising the pound.

"I wish to confirm that there should be no worries about the pound whatsoever, and that we strongly support the policy of stabilising the national currency and we will not change this policy," he added.

The central bank has intervened in the last two weeks, selling dollars to stabilise the Lebanese pound exchange rate when Hariri refused an extension to his six-year term.

A draft law to outline terms for privatisation is going to be presented to parliament as soon as possible.

"We will discuss the (privatisation) draft law at the parliament and if it is approved we will apply it to certain utilities and this is another way to curb the public debt," he said.

Europe hails new fiscal, monetary policy mix

VIENNA (R) — Europe's predominantly centre-left governments have signed off on a peace deal with the European Central Bank (ECB) that they hope will lead to lower interest rates if economic growth slows early next year.

European Union (EU) leaders agreed at a Vienna summit that "dialogue with the European Central Bank is progressing well."

"The balance between fiscal and monetary policies has evolved in a way supporting sustainable growth," they said in a statement.

Earlier this month central banks in 10 of the 11 countries joining the euro cut key rates to three per cent to underpin growth and offset the impact of the emerging markets crisis.

In return, governments pledged to keep a tight rein on public spending and limit budget deficits, and publicly stressed that they respected the independence of the central bank.

EU leaders said conditions were now in place for sustained economic growth and a reduction in unemployment although they referred to "falling" rather than "low" interest rates.

"Much has already been achieved — robust economic growth, low infla-

tion and falling interest rates," they said.

The tone of the statement would have been unthinkable before German elections in September ousted conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl, an implacable opponent of anything that might smack of political interference in the ECB.

"Economic policy coordination is our primary goal. Long-lasting resistance in this field has been overcome," Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima told a news conference.

Oscar Freisch official compared the new relationship between EU governments and the ECB to that of U.S. President Bill Clinton and Federal Reserve head Alan Greenspan, in which tight budgets are supported by a more accommodating monetary policy.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker said that if there were a slowdown in growth, Europe could respond with both economic and monetary policies rather than raising spending.

"I would think we are now approaching a moment when an adequate policy-mix could be developed, taking on elements of macro-economic policies and elements of monetary policy," he told Reuters Television.

"If the policy mix is adequate you do not need the increase in effort on the spending side," Juncker said.

Less than two months ago, EU governments were at loggerheads with their central bankers, stridently calling for rate cuts to rescue their economies from the emerging markets crisis.

But the Vienna statement read like a peace treaty, acknowledging that structural reform, wage moderation and low

deficits — traditional demands of central banks — were needed to underpin growth and employment.

"Appropriate and coordinated responses to economic challenges are needed...encompassing budgetary and monetary policies as well as structural policies and taking into account wage developments," it said.

An annex to the statement also acknowledged that the exchange rate for the euro — a potential

bone of contention between governments and central banks — would be the result of economic policies rather than a tool to manipulate the economy.

Economic policy coordination would involve "close monitoring of exchange rate developments of the euro and other EU currencies in the recognition that, in general, these should be seen as the outcome of all other policies," it said.

Exchange Rates		Sunday, 13-12-98		ACCESS 4448662	
Currency	Unit	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8778	1.8390
SAUDI RIYAL	5.0000	0.1888	0.1927	9.3973	9.1512
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.1000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
QATAR RIYAL	0.1000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
KUWAIT DINAR	0.1000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
LIBYAN DINAR	0.1000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
YEMENI RIAL	0.1000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
EGYPTIAN POUND	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
LEBANON LIRA	21.4531	0.1888	0.1927	4.1408	39.5095
IRAN RIAL	1.4124	0.1888	0.1927	2.8523	2.5974
AFGHAN AFGANI	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
THAI BATH	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
TAIWANESE DOLLAR	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
HONG KONG DOLLAR	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
MACAU PATAKA	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
CHINESE YUAN	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
RUSSIAN RUBLE	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
UK POUND	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839
EURO	0.0001	0.1888	0.1927	0.1888	0.1839

Major Currencies Against Jordan Dinar		Central Bank Bulletin	
Currency	Unit	Rate	Rate
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927
GERMAN MARK	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927
FRANCE FRANC	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927
UK POUND	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927
EURO	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927

World Stock Markets		Precious Metals	
Stock Market	Index	Close	Change
FRANKFURT	DAX	4236.20	+106.40
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10315.44	+384.44
LONDON	FTSE 100	5980.30	+118.00
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	8621.70	+84.50
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	864.81	+1.28
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	857.78	+4.40
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1108.48	+1.44
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	14607.81	+402.19
PARIS	CAC 40	3745.97	+51.27
FRANKFURT	COMPOSITE	4248.80	+110.70

Dollar reigns supreme, despite allure of euro — U.S. analysts

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The birth of the euro will have little effect on management of the U.S. economy, which relies heavily on foreign capital to finance public and private spending, many analysts here argue.

The main concern is not that the euro might attract money away from the U.S. credit market but that the whole single currency plan is a highly risky adventure.

If the euro plan goes wrong, Europe will not be able to pull its weight in boosting the global economy, they fear.

If the euro does work, analysts here are confident that the dollar will continue to reign supreme and the United States will attract funds without undue concern about the exchange rate or that interest rates might have to rise.

Financial analysts here acknowledge that the euro zone could prove to be an

attractive alternative to international investors anxious to diversify their holdings, but stress that the impact on the U.S. market will be limited.

For at least a year now U.S. Treasury officials have wished the euro well, assuring audiences that the stature of the dollar will be unaffected by competition from the new currency — provided that U.S. economic fundamentals remain healthy.

Many analysts in Europe have raised the possibility that the arrival of the euro, in creating the first truly alternative vehicle to the dollar, might drain huge amounts of international funds which would now have tended to flow with little question into the U.S. economy.

This flow compensates in part for a huge shortfall of U.S. domestic savings, which are now a negative factor, and a current

account deficit.

Private forecasts say that the U.S. current account deficit this year could rise from 1.9 per cent to 2.8 per cent of output or to \$235 billion.

People in Europe and Japan, overall are net savers, but the average American lives on credit.

This week Deputy U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers repeated the official view:

"The bottom line is that the attractiveness of the euro will ultimately depend on the same factors determining the attractiveness of the dollar: The long-term credibility of policies underpinning the currency and the efficiency of European financial markets," he wrote in a special edition of Newsweek magazine.

Vibrant European capital markets, according to the U.S. argument, will help allocate investments more efficiently and boost

Europe's role as an engine for global growth, taking pressure off the United States.

Once the single currency takes effect, national central banks in the EMU (European monetary union) area can be expected to reduce their dollar reserve holdings. Estimates of the value of unneeded reserves vary from \$50 billion to \$230 billion, according to the International Monetary Fund.

But fund analysts said such amounts were small in relation to overall U.S. international assets and liabilities and the sale of these "surplus" dollars would not therefore exert much downward pressure on the U.S. currency.

However, development of highly liquid European financial markets could drain off some of the \$11 trillion that were invested in U.S. equity markets last year.

"Some Asian countries will want to balance their reserves, which are now too heavily in U.S. dollars," Malaysian economist Martin Khor Kok Peng with the Third World Network of non-governmental organisations, said.

The euro "will draw some capital from Asian countries that are over-dependent on the U.S. dollar, which today appears strong, but as everybody knows it may weaken in future. What other strong currencies are there?"

"The (Japanese) yen is too unstable and the euro is the obvious choice," he indicated.

Other economists predict that some businesses seeking to expand will be enticed away from the United States to the 11 countries of the euro zone.

But, to the extreme annoyance of their Euro

(Continued on page 9)

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Fragrant shrub
- 2 Whack
- 3 Pre-college tests
- 4 Cork population
- 5 Verdi opera
- 6 Rear appendage
- 7 "Law & Order" co-star
- 8 Question
- 9 Rank by merit
- 10 Extra strip in shoe
- 11 Family greeting
- 12 Tarnisher
- 13 Stir up
- 14 Waterproofs
- 15 "Law & Order" co-star
- 16 Mess up
- 17 At any time
- 18 Worshipped one
- 19 Piece of Puccini
- 20 Sitch
- 21 "Law & Order" co-star
- 22 Spared
- 23 Practices recycling
- 24 Changes borders
- 25 Sunrise direction
- 26 One who makes amends
- 27 Eight ft.
- 28 Broadway success
- 29 "Law & Order" co-star
- 30 "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" composer
- 31 A Great Lake
- 32 "My Cousin Vinny" actress
- 33 Work hard
- 34 Woodland ruminant
- 35 Plant parts

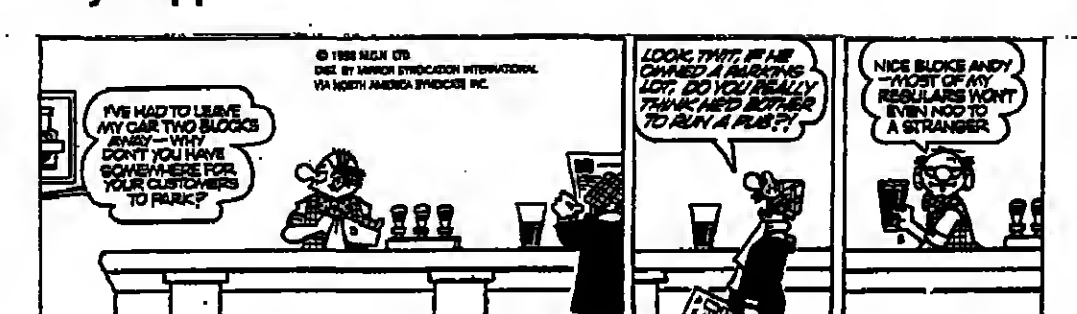
DOWN

- 1 Partisan capital
- 2 Showy flower
- 3 Taste ice cream
- 4 Cigar and
- 5 Aims
- 6 Epson
- 7 Citrus fruit
- 8 Boisterous
- 9 Of spouses
- 10 Balance
- 11 Home run number one
- 12 Boding champion's prize
- 13 More crafty
- 14 Art holder
- 15 Total
- 16 Dyeing vat
- 17 Wom and
- 18 Shabby
- 19 Cools down
- 20 Church part
- 21 Ship's personnel
- 22 Cavalry weapon
- 23 Evil characters
- 24 Time periods
- 25 Houston university
- 26 College cheers
- 27 Border (on)
- 28 Architect Inigo
- 29 Brought to bear
- 30 Spout off
- 31 Vacation complexes
- 32 Fish
- 33 Gospel light preparation
- 34 Book displays
- 35 Smeary pile
- 36 Singer Merman
- 37 Fictional swordsmen
- 38 Anesthetic
- 39 Mayberry boy
- 40 Abode
- 41 Gospel light preparation
- 42 The one here
- 43 Smeary pile
- 44 Ready or

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



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UTTOL

ROMMEY

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: CROUP ORONE FACING EXOTIC Answer: What they did when their luggage was lost - CARRIED ON

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Private sector will be asked to submit new offers for opening post offices

**** THE MINISTRY** of Post and Telecommunications is reconsidering the terms for licensing private post offices and will announce the new terms within a month, Post and Telecommunications Minister Suleiman Hafez has told Al Ra'i. He pointed out that the government has stopped the licences it has decided to grant to some applicants who submitted requests to license private post offices following an authorisation by the Council of Ministers.

The minister indicated that the private sector will be asked to submit new offers that will be examined in light of the new terms. The ministry will return to the previous bidders the JD50 that was paid by each of them to buy the tender document, Hafez said. He added that since the government opened the door for receiving applications last August, about 300 requests from individuals, institutions and companies were submitted to set up private post offices.

Hafez explained that the reconsideration of licensing terms aims at upgrading

ing the terms in order to attract offers from more qualified companies in terms of capital and qualifications to ensure providing better services. He mentioned that some of the bids submitted before met the terms but some others were not qualified. "We stopped the process because we want it to be better organized and more assuring of the capability to provide better service," Hafez stressed.

Asked about the Postal Saving Fund, the minister said it would be restructured and that specific measures would be set to increase deposits and savings. He said cash prizes linked to the amount of deposits will also be organised in order to encourage savings. Hafez revealed that nearly 100,000 accounts with balances of less than JD1 each were closed by the Postal Saving Fund because of the high cost of servicing them. The accounts that were closed had a total amount of JD17,000 (Al Ra'i).

Mansur expects recovery in construction sector, progress in privatisation next year

**** COMMENTING** ON the 1999 general budget, which envisages the gross domestic product growing at a rate better than the one estimated for this year, a senior planning official said the growth should be accompanied by a series of policies which should be quick to revitalise the Jordanian economy. He indicated that such policies are needed to avoid any crisis resulting from regional upheavals.

Yousef Mansur, head of the technical supporting unit at the Ministry of Planning, said "the prices of oil, the global decline in growth rates, the weak trade with the Palestinian territories and the crises that hit the Asian Tigers have all affected the economic situation this year."

He expected the improved growth

rates to come as a result of many factors which are forecast to be successful next year. He saw a potential for revitalisation of trade with the Palestinians, for lifting of hindrances "west of the river" and for better tourism situation in Jordan. Mansur expected a recovery in the construction sector next year and progress in the privatisation process.

The planning official stressed the importance of stability in the region to achieve the aspired goals and also emphasised the importance of taking internal measures to activate the economy such as exempting the industrial inputs from customs and taxes. "The highest aspirations at present, however, is to reduce the deficit and increase government revenues," Mansur concluded (Al Dustour).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You feel like you have to do something because of the competition, or because somebody else is pushing you to increase your performance. This can be stimulating and energising, if you don't get rattled. You may feel like making a run for it, all week long, to avoid the situation altogether.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You could have some interesting conversations with your mate today. Your attention is on money, especially money you share with each other. Figure out how much you have, and how much you can spend. There may be a couple of things coming up that could get expensive if you don't plan ahead.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Everybody seems to have something for you to do, and you'd rather be out playing. You can't change the conditions, but you can change your attitude about them. That's important; you want to have fun while you're doing this job, and you can. You can also make yourself look very good to this person you think is so cute.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Save as much time as you can for love. You'll be in the mood, and so will the person you'd like to spend that time with. If you don't have anyone like that in your life now, today and tomorrow are great days for finding one. The world's cutest delivery person might ring your doorbell. Be prepared.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You have plenty to keep you busy at home. You've got projects, of course, but romance is also demanding a lot of attention, and a lot of work, too. You could be feeling overwhelmed, but don't be. Your energy level is high, and you know what? You'll get it all done. Have a great time while you're at it.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) There are several things you said you'd do that you don't quite know how to accomplish. No problem. You can cook that goose in brandy sauce simply by reading the recipe. Read it a couple times, just to be certain.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Today and tomorrow are about money, figuring out your budget, paying your bills. It's important to know how much you have before you go out to spend it, and you'll have plenty to spend it on. You may have to find a way to get more. Look at it as your excuse to be creative.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Today and tomorrow are excellent for figuring out money. There are some creative ideas bubbling around in this cauldron, and with any luck, you'll be able to fish them out. If there's something you could offer to do in exchange for a bonus, definitely mention it. Looks like there's work backed up; this could be your opportunity.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You know what needs to be done, and if you don't get it done quickly, you could be in trouble. Well, not real trouble, perhaps, but you'd feel guilty just the same. And as every Sagittarius knows, a little guilt goes a long way. Minimise it by doing what you know you have to do, and stop complaining about it, even in your mind.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Home and family are important, but something even bigger is going on. You're bonding with your whole community again. This has happened before, but it's always a comforting feeling. You don't get to spend the whole day playing, though. There's work to be done.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Watch your P's and Q's. Somebody else sue is, and that person might have a promotion in mind. Make sure you put on a good showing, while you're getting this attention. You're also being graded on past performances, but knowing you, your past performance has been awesome.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Something you learn today could benefit your career. At first, it looks like you're wasting time or even headed in the wrong direction. Don't worry. If you're following your intuition, you're on the right track. Following your heart, too, and a friend's advice. Put them together and they'll lead you into something you love.

Japan takes over Nippon Credit Bank to save financial system

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's government took over the debt-ridden Nippon Credit Bank Ltd. on Sunday in a crucial strike against the banking crisis rocking the world's second largest economy.

The bank had liabilities of 94.4 billion yen (\$800 million) in March this year because of its huge bad loans, officials said, and had failed to come up with a realistic recovery plan.

From Sunday the government took over all the bank's stock, only the second time Tokyo has nationalised one of its major banks.

"The bank has yet to outline a realistic path to achieve recapitalisation," Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said in a statement.

Executives at Nippon Credit, set up in 1957 to finance Japan's post-war industrial revival, refused to give in and lodged a last-minute written appeal early Sunday insisting the bank had never been insolvent.

"We feel this government decision is extremely regrettable. The government's decision is extremely abrupt," bank President Shigeo Togo told a news conference.

Togo said he would resign but insisted his bank was not insolvent and should not have been nationalised, although he admitted bad loans were hard to write off in the face of the country's worst post-war recession.

But Obuchi overrode their complaints. Officials believe the bank wrongly assessed its loan portfolio, refusing to acknowledge some loans had turned bad.

A government inspection showed the bank was insolvent as of March this year, he said.

The government will also now decide the price to be

paid for the bank's shares. Nippon Credit's stock closed at 138 yen on Friday.

Nippon Credit is the second top Japanese bank to be nationalised in just two months after its rival Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan was put under state control in October, again brought down by its heavy bad loans.

Hakuo Yanagisawa, head of Japan's Financial Revitalisation Committee and a key player in resolving the banking crisis, said no other banks were in capital deficit.

"As far as I know there is no bank whose liabilities exceed assets," he told reporters.

Bad loans at Nippon Credit were expected to reach 3.2 trillion yen (\$27 billion) by next March, about one-third of its total lending.

Many top banks have been brought to the brink of collapse by their bad loans, which have snowballed since the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s.

For the past few years Nippon Credit has attempted to survive the difficulties by carrying out drastic restructuring measures and seeking support from healthier partners.

But last week a planned merger with another bank, Chuo Trust and Banking Co. Ltd., fell through, leaving Nippon Credit vulnerable.

The bank also refused to ask for an injection of public funds from the government, even though nearly every other major bank said it would ask for money.

Government inspectors found bad and risky loans at Nippon Credit came to 3.7 trillion yen in March, but the bank insisted only 3.2 trillion yen of its loans were bad or risky.

The government will also now decide the price to be

Dollar reigns supreme, despite allure of euro — U.S. analysts

(Continued from page 8)

pean counterparts. U.S. officials have harped on the need to remove what they see as structural constraints on doing business in the European Union, in particular urging that employers be given more authority to hire and fire.

The chief economist at Wright Investors Service of Connecticut, Amit Khandwala, argued that concern that

the euro might found appeared to be behind a recent drive by European firms, notably Deutsche Bank and Daimler-Benz of Germany, and by Dutch insurance companies and Irish banks, to increase their holdings in the United States.

"They're trying to cushion themselves in the event there is turmoil in Europe," he said. Khandwala and other financial analysts here maintain that

the United States will suffer little "inconvenience" from the euro, notably because the euro area accounts for only 13.8 per cent of total U.S. trade.

"The United States remains a superpower," said Khandwala. "And it's not just Europe that's investing in the U.S. It's Japan and Asia. The U.S. remains one of the most important markets for the Japanese and it's one they're not going to try to overlook."

Intelligentsia prepares for millennium celebrations

AMMAN (ITT) — As part of its preparation to participate in the celebrations of the second millennium, Intelligentsia for Research, Studies and Information in Amman and Milan is planning for several tourist activities in Jordan, Palestine and Egypt.

The planned schemes will include a wide-range participation in international tourist exhibitions and issuing a two-part guide book, Bethlehem 2000 Directory and Bethlehem 2000 Gateways.

The guide will contain historical, tourist and religion-related information on the city of Bethlehem. The book also will include a promotion for archaeological sites and a list of hotels and tourist facilities in the three countries. Around 100,000 copies of the guide will be issued in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian in the beginning of 1999. It will be distributed to international tourist organisation and exhibition visitors in Europe.

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The new Mercedes-Benz CL: In a class of its own

STUTTGART — Once again, Mercedes-Benz is injecting impetus into the top end of the luxury car market. To follow the successful new S-Class, the Stuttgart-based car manufacturer is now to unveil another model with special attributes: the large Mercedes coupé. The new CL will make its worldwide debut next March and will be appearing in the showrooms of the Mercedes-Benz brand sales and service outlets by fall 1999.

The two-door car exudes an unmistakable aura. Formal elegance is combined with technical perfection to produce a synthesis of dynamism and beauty. The new model bears the hall-

marks of the Mercedes style, such as the familiar four-eyed face with the oval double headlights.

The same approach can be found in all aspects of the car's technology: the Mercedes coupé leads the world car market with innovations hitherto unseen. The principal innovation is the completely new Active Body Control (ABC) suspension system which creates optimum levels of sportiness and comfort. Using sensor signals and special hydraulic cylinders on the axles, ABC virtually eliminates the roll and pitch movements familiar to drivers when setting off, cornering and braking.



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Asian Games

Jordan eliminated from track events

Kingdom competes in weightlifting, boxing finals today

By Aileen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan
sports media reporters
in Bangkok

JORDAN'S MOHAMMAD Abu Khadijeh carefully studied his next opponent as he prepared for his next heavyweight boxing bout Monday when he hopes to win the country's first gold medal at the 13th Asian Games, which concludes in Bangkok Dec. 20.

Ahu Khadijeh expressed confidence he would win his next bout after he already assured himself a bronze medal by eliminating first opponent in 1 minute 18 seconds before the referee stopped the match.

"I'll hopefully score a knockout. I am fully aware of my opponents weak points, and I am determined to bring glory for my country," Abu Khadijeh told reporters.

Ahu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals within a year — at the 8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and the 18th Arab Boxing Championships in Tunisia, will next meet Pakistan's Mirza Mazfar tomorrow in the 91 kilogramme class.

Also Monday, weightlifter Awad Aboudi will compete in the heavyweight 105-kilogramme class, in which he hopes to set an Arab record.

The athletics competition pins high hopes on Fakhreddin Fuad when the events resume Tuesday.

Fuad — a high jump gold medalist at the Pan-Arab Games — achieved 215 centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222 at

the team's training camp in Qatar where teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53 — 18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

On Sunday, Mohammad Mutari finished the 1,500 metre with a time of 3:59.30 short of his time of 3:47.9.

In the 400 metres, teammate Mohammad Shaman also came short of his own best time of 48.28 finishing sixth and last place with a time of 49.64 in his group where the top three qualified to the second round.

Shaman said the 400 metre race was not his event and that he had trained for the 800 metre race in which he hoped to do better.

Shaman was probably a replacement for teammate Shadi Ka'kur who was supposed to compete in the 200 and 400 metres but was returned home by Jordanian delegation officials for failing to comply with delegation regulations and causing problems citing that officials did not try to issue a pass for his Chinese coach after he was not allowed in because his name was not listed among Jordan's delegation.

Shaman and Mutari will compete in the 800 metres Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Jordan's Mohammad Masri was eliminated from the bowling event as well as shooting, in which Mazen Khatib, Aysar Hiyari and Nizar Madi competed.

The karate draw took place Sunday as Jordan's team — headed by Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist Butheina Mahsiri prepared

for the event that starts Tuesday.

Jordan is yet to win gold at the Asian Games. In the past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94, Jordan's sole medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals.

The Kingdom has so far won four medals — all in taekwondo. Ibrahim Aqel, Ala' Kutkut, and Hussein Tahleh won silver. Mohammad Farajeh won bronze.

Although the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) carefully screened each participating federation's athletes and preparations to enlist the best athletes in each sport, apart from taekwondo so far, the rest of the sports produced disappointing results.

The Kingdom took part alongside 40 other countries (only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan missed the event) in the last sporting event of the century with 19 officials and 37 athletes.

Jordan competed in 11 sports: athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

In swimming, Hana Majaj, bad disappointing results that lagged far off from her local records.

Majaj finished last in the 200-metre butterfly with a time of 2:40.85 while her local time was 2:26.00.

Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist Majaj also came in 18th with a time 1:13.16 in the 100-metre butterfly, also far off her local time.

In boxing, Basel Hindawi, bronze medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, and gold medalist Ayman Nadi failed to earn medals for Jordan as they competed alongside 180 athletes from 31 nations in the event.

In squash, the country's top player Mohammad Saeed lost 3-0 in the quarterfinals to one of Pakistan's top players — Zarak Khan. Jordan's Majd Njada also lost 3-0 to a player from Hong Kong.

In taekwondo, Nancy Hindi, Zaha Talhouini, Luma Abu Judum, Ali Asmar, Alisar Matar, Mohammad Abul Ruz and Ahlam Bino lost their bouts. The rest of their teammates secured Jordan's four medals so far.

In judo, Mousa Khalaf, a silver medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, was eliminated, alongside Rami Dasougi and Tawfiq Suleiman.

In gymnastics, Jordan's Ahmad Abdo and Shadi Khouri obtained 45th and 47th places respectively.

In weightlifting, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) reprimanded the Jordan Olympic Committee after the country's top weightlifter, Ayed Khawaldeh, became the first athlete to test positive at the Bangkok Games after setting a new Arab record finishing seventh among fifteen participants in the 56-kilogramme class.

He was found to have taken the diuretic Triamterene in a random test following which he was immediately disqualified and expelled from the Games village by the OCA which handed the matter to the sport's governing body to impose international suspension which will bar him from the Pan-Arab Games.

Jordanian delegation officials ordered his return home after a second positive test. He is expected to serve a two-year suspension.

Minister meets returning athletes

AMMAN — Over half of Jordan's 56-member delegation who ended competition at the Asian Games returned home Sunday and were met by Minister of Culture and Youth Tahar Sata'an, Al Hassan and Jordan Olympic Committee officials.

The minister lauded the Kingdom's participation and achievements especially in taekwondo.

"Our efforts will now be directed towards preparing for the Pan-Arab Games," the minister said.

Taekwondo official Mkhled Assaf, expressed the taekwondo federation's appreciation of Crown Prince Hassan's support for the team, and dedicated Jordan's four medals to His Majesty King Hussein and Prince Hassan.

The Jordan Olympic Committee has underlined the importance of taking part in the Asian Games saying it was an invaluable chance to assess our teams' and improve our location on the map of Asian sports being part of plans of the Ministry of Culture and Youth to prepare teams for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Khawaldeh, who was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer, said his Chinese coach has instructed him to take the medicine during the West Asian Games in Tehran and during another championship in Algeria last year, and did not know that it contained a banned substance.

The Kingdom did not taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball due to reason pertaining to their respective federations.

I want to give my medal to King Hussein — Abu Khadijeh

BANGKOK (AFP) — Jordanian boxer Mohammad Abu Khadijeh will fulfill a pledge to King Hussein after ensuring himself of at least a bronze medal in the Asian Games boxing.

Abu-Khadijeh vowed to give any medal he wins in the 91-kilogramme contest in Bangkok to the King, who is being treated for cancer of the lymph nodes.

The 26-year-old Jordanian reached the semifinals, where he is guaranteed at least a bronze, after stopping Palestine's Osama Abdul inside the distance.

"I want to give my medal to King Hussein," said Abu Khadijeh. "But I want it to be a gold medal. I know I can win the gold in Bangkok."

He also knows he faces a tough task. Jordan has never won gold at the Asian Games, although it has collected eight silver medals, including four at these Games.

Abu Khadijeh is also up against some of the world's best amateur boxers, including Uzbekistan's powerful Ruslan Chagaev.

But he sees Bangkok as the place to announce his arrival on the world boxing scene, culminating, he hopes, in a professional career.

"If I can win gold here, then I hope to represent Jordan at the Sydney Olympics (in 2000)," said Abu Khadijeh, the Arab Games and West Asian champion.

The moustachioed Abu-Khadijeh says the lack of quality opposition in Jordan hampers his rise.

"To be a good boxer you have to train hard but there is a lack of good sparring partners for me in Jordan," he said. "That's why competitions like the Asian Games are important for me."



Kazakhstan's wrestler Sergey Matviyenko (bottom) throws Mohamed Al Haek of Syria during their final match of the under 97 kilograms Greco-Roman style wrestling in the 13th Asian Games at the Thammamasat University Sports Complex in Bangkok. Matviyenko beat Al Haek to win the gold medal (AFP photo)

2nd Division Basketball Championship

Homentmen edge closer to First Division

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While Al Wihdat continued their winning streak and an unrivalled lead atop the Second Division Basketball Championship, Homentmen scored a major upset over Al Fuhais to nearly book one of two slots to return to the First Division.

While they remained third on score difference, Homentmen have relatively easier matches which they are favoured to win against Abu Nusair and Ebbin, to take the second slot back to the First Division.

Al Fuhais meanwhile are expected to lose their match against Al Wihdat on Dec. 25 which will drop them to third place and therefore lose the qualifying chance to the First Division.

Clearly undermanned and showing the ill-effects of late training, Homentmen had only lost to Al Wihdat 107-48. After their win Sunday, they are now assured of promotion to the First Division after an absence of three years, provided they win the rest of their matches.

Led by the trio of veterans Sevan Sarkissian, Vicken Avakian and Ibrahim Tadros, Homentmen surprised Fuhais leading 13-7, 19-19 before winning the first half 28-22.

Fuhais caught up to tie at 30-30, and then led 39-38 before Homentmen took the lead again to finish the match with a 49-44 vital win.

Led by coach Ghaith Al Najjar who previously trained Al Ahli, Al Wihdat are

assured of keeping their lead and taking the top slot in the standings as they have scored five wins easily passing the 100-mark in all their matches.

Playing in the Second Division for only the second year, they beat Samma 118-26 in their fifth successive win. Meanwhile, Ebbin beat Al Rayeh 76-71. The other match between Ashrafieh and Abu Nusair took place in Irbid. The result was unavailable by press time.

The eight-team event which concludes Dec. 25 when top two of the eight teams will be promoted this year making the total number of First Division teams eight instead of six.

Missing from the event is Al Watani, a former First Division team who were relegated but failed to participate in the Second Division.

Also not playing are teams like Gazzet Hashem, Karak and Sahab.

The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) this year organised only three other events: the first division and the Under-14 won by Al Orthodoxi, and the Under-16 won by Al Jazireh.

The women's, juniors, and Under-22 were cancelled while the JBF is discussing holding the under-18 with the concerned clubs.

The First Division includes Al Orthodoxi, Al Ahli, Al Jazireh, Al Jalil, Al Hussein and Al Jeel.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Wihdat	5	5	-	555	240	10
Fuhais	5	4	1	363	295	9
Homentmen	5	4	1	327	291	9
Rayeh	5	1	4	283	339	6
Ebbin	4	2	2	234	309	6
Abu Nusair	4	1	3	254	289	5
Ashrafieh	4	1	3	235	288	5
Samma	4	-	4	106	306	4

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Arafat receives Faisali's soccer delegation

GAZA — Ahead of U.S. President Bill Clinton's historic visit to the Palestinian areas, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Sunday received Al Faisali Soccer team's delegation, which played several matches against five teams there. Al Faisali defeated the teams of Palestine Club 3-0, Silwan 1-0, Jericho's Hilal 4-0, Tulkarem 2-1 and drew with Hebron 2-2.

Olympic committee requests federation schedules

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee's (JOC) Technical Committee will ask sport federations to draw up their teams' plans in preparation for the 9th Pan-Arab Games, to be held in Amman Aug. 15-31, 1999. This includes setting up training schedules, training camps, friendly matches and other expenses. The committee also asked some federations to finalise information regarding their training and expenses of national teams. Meanwhile, a JOC delegation will inspect the weightlifting centre at the Al Hussein Youth City in order to provide the facility with necessary equipment.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

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Jordan's endurance race team returns home

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's team which took part in the 1998 World Endurance Championship in United Arab Emirates returned home Sunday after placing 8th out of only 10 teams to finish the 27-team 160-kilometre ride.

All four of Jordan's team finished the race as well as one of two individual entries, and was the only Arab team to complete the race. The only other team to finish with all four starters was the final gold medal winners, New Zealand, although none of their individual entries finished.

The silver medal went to the USA with Australia in third place. Argentina came in fourth, Belgium fifth, Brazil sixth, the U.K. seventh, Jordan eighth, Sweden ninth and Germany tenth.

In the individual ranking, 77 out of 175 starts finished with the gold medal going

to Valerie Kanavy of the U.S. a two-time previous World Champion defeated in 1996 by her daughter Danielle, who unfortunately did not complete the race this time. Silver medal went to Fausto Fucci of Italy, and Bronze to Daesko Yasonaga of Japan.

Fourth position went to H.H. Sheikh Hamdan Ben Mohammed Al Maktoum and fifth to Mohammad Al Shafan, both of the U.A.E.

The prize for best conditioned horse went to the United Arab Emirates, and the best trainer to France (Jordan was one of the three final nominees for the position).

Thirty seven countries entered the World Championship race, from Europe, Scandinavia, North and South America, Australia, Africa and the Middle and Far East.

IOC member slams African votes claim

BANGKOK (AFP) — Claims that African votes were up for sale for any city wanting to host the Olympics were bitterly denounced here Sunday by leading African IOC member.

"The targets of these claims always seem to be Africans," complained Sam Ramsamy, South Africa's IOC member and a key member of the Cape Town bid to win the 2004 Olympics. They lost out to Athens.

"When Cape Town was bidding I made it very clear to everyone not to offer anything that was beyond the IOC instructions," he said. "If anything improper had gone on I would have been the first to report it."

The IOC has already announced a special inquiry to investigate claims by Marc Hodler, a senior Swiss member of the IOC executive board, that millions of dollars in bribes had been paid to IOC members to secure votes.

"We are going to find out as quickly as possible what truth there is behind these allegations," said IOC vice-president Dick Pound, one of the leading candidates to replace president Juan Antonio Samaranch who retires in 2002.

Hodler, an 80-year-old lawyer, alleged malpractice in the campaigns conducted by Atlanta for the 1996 Games, Nagano for 1998, Sydney for 2000 and when Salt Lake City won the 2002 winter Games.

He told reporters in Lausanne that agents had demanded up to \$1 million to deliver votes in the selection of host cities, and that he believed five to seven per cent of IOC members had solicited bribes. There are currently 115 IOC members.

Hodler said a group of four agents, including an African IOC member, had been involved in promising votes for payment, although he declined to identify them.

"The four agents try to make a living out of this," he said. "I missed a chance to be a rich man. Some of the agents do the following: they say, 'I can offer this or that number of votes.'"

"The price would be between \$500,000 and \$1.0 million for a number of votes, a bloc."

Hodler added that the agents then charged the city winning the bid something like \$3 million to \$5 million.

He said there was one agent who boasted "that no city has ever won the Olympic Games without his help".

NBA's 'secret' talks break down

NEW YORK (AFP) — A full-season shutdown of the National Basketball Association moved closer to reality here Saturday when a "secret" negotiating session broke up after less than half an hour.

"We're getting nowhere," NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik said as he left the second set of secluded talks in three days.

A Houston newspaper report, citing unidentified sources in the talks, said a deal was near, with a change to salary cap exemption rules and a compromise of 54 per cent of basketball-related income going to players.

But the latest stalemate leaves precious little time to start a shortened season.

"We discussed general issues we thought were pertinent," union executive director Billy Hunter said. "They basically said they had nothing more to say and they thought it was not necessary to continue to meet, and they basically left."

Owners locked out players on July 1 and the NBA missed games for the first time due to a labour dispute. Should the entire season be wiped out it would be the first time in pro sports a labour dispute cost so much.

NBA officials have said that it will take a minimum of four weeks to conduct a free agency period and have training camps, so it is unlikely a season could now start before mid-January.

NBA officials have also said they want a minimum of 50 games in what was planned to be an 82-game campaign, leaving little time before they must compromise their intentions or be unable to complete a season and playoffs before the end of June to satisfy television contracts.

Jayasinghe injured in qualifiers

BANGKOK (AFP) — Sasanthika Jayasinghe could pull out of the Asian Games 100 metre final after pulling a muscle while qualifying on Sunday.

The Sri Lankan refused to make a quick decision over Monday's race but said: "I felt a twinge in the right hamstring as I finished."

"I hope it's a little problem but I'm going to see the doctor."

"Then I will decide. It's too early to be sure if I'm out or not."

Jayasinghe, who is being investigated by the International Amateur Athletic Federation after failing a drugs test earlier this year, also revealed she had been struck by 'flu over the past few days, interrupting her training.

She reached the final grudgingly all the way to the tape as she won her opening semi-final in 11.30 seconds.

China's Li Xuemei, meanwhile, threw down the gauntlet at the feet of her bitter rival as she stormed home in 10.99sec — way inside the previous Games record but disallowed because of an illegal wind.

The two rivals exchanged taunts last week after Chinese officials suggested Jayasinghe should be barred from running here until the drugs probe was finished.

The 23-year-old Jayasinghe had been stung in responding: "I won't just



Sri Lanka's controversial runner Sasanthika Jayasinghe powers her way from the starting block in the semifinal of the women's 100m sprint competition at the Main Stadium of the Thammasat University Sports Complex in Bangkok. Jayasinghe clocked 11.30 to qualify for the final (AFP photo)

win the 100 and the 200 metres — I'll win them in record time. There's only one good sprinter here and that's me."

Li replied: "I don't mind what Jayasinghe said. I am

ready to beat all rivals."

Li holds the Asian records for both 100 and 200m but Jayasinghe eclipsed her at the World Championships last year by winning the 200m silver in her favourite event.

Asian Games medals table

Country	G	S	B	Total
China	79	52	38	169
South Korea	35	22	34	91
Japan	32	35	41	108
Kazakhstan	14	16	18	48
Thailand	13	15	24	52
Chinese Taipei	13	9	18	40
North Korea	5	11	5	21
Malaysia	3	8	6	17
Iran	3	4	7	14
Kuwait	3	3	2	8
Pakistan	2	2	2	6
Singapore	2	1	7	10
Mongolia	2	0	5	7
Uzbekistan	1	9	9	19
Indonesia	1	3	5	9
Hong Kong	1	2	6	9
Vietnam	1	2	4	7
Turkmenistan	1	0	0	1
Myanmar	0	4	3	7
Jordan	0	3	1	4
Philippines	0	3	7	10
India	0	2	4	6
Kyrgyzstan	0	2	2	4
Nepal	0	1	2	3
Syria	0	1	1	2
Qatar	0	1	0	1
UAE	0	0	1	1
Total	211	211	252	674

Asian Olympic boss calls for World Cup boycott

BANGKOK (AFP) — The head of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has called for an Asian boycott of the football World Cup if the continent's representation at the 2002 finals is not increased.

Even though the finals are to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, the OCA president Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah said Asia must fight for its rights.

The sheikh, one of the top six figures in world sport, made his call in an interview with AFP ahead of an emergency meeting of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Tuesday to discuss FIFA's decision to award just four places to the continent at the 2002 finals — but two automatically go to the co-hosts.

"I had a conversation with the AFC president Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah and with the Arabic contingent and we are going towards a boycott. Because if we accept what happened now it will happen every time," he declared.

"We will boycott the World Cup qualification if we do not get our rights," said the sheikh who is also president of the Football Federation of Kuwait.

"I said two years ago that we don't have the soldiers to fight for our interests and I was proved right. We have to be united to get our rights, otherwise we will have to boycott."

FIFA's executive committee decided earlier this month to give Asia only

two places — on top of those for Japan and South Korea — to be contested by the rest of the confederation's 43 members.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan has already attacked the decision saying "Asia is the loser here and it shows that FIFA has no respect for Asia at all."

Asia had three guaranteed representatives at France '98. South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia qualified directly and Iran defeated Australia in a playoff.

Velappan said Tuesday's emergency meeting would concentrate on the end of the so-called three and half places formula. "The president and the executive committee are very angry and disappointed with this decision and we will be discussing what to do next."

The sheikh said FIFA had been short-sighted in just taking into account Asia's relatively weak results from this year's finals.

"FIFA has to take into account that Asia is the second economic power in the world, it has 45 per cent of the sponsor companies for the World Cup, and not to look just at the technical results of the World Cup," he said.

He added that he would expect South Korea and Japan to support any boycott vote.

"Our decision might cause some problems for the two host countries but they will be the losers otherwise. The World Cup will last only one month, but their future lies with the

Asian confederation," he warned.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter had been due to visit Bangkok last week after touring South Korea and Japan to see the 2002 preparations. He called it off because of illness.

The AFC will come up with some form of action to show the international governing body that it means business.

But on top of the tub-thumping from the sheikh

and Velappan, Asian soccer chiefs are already trying to figure out a compromise to reduce the insult.

Velappan has said that Oceania nations, including Australia, could be brought

into the Asian qualifying groups. Under the current FIFA plan, the Oceania winner takes part in a play-off with one of the top South American runners-up.

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Opposition affirms commitment to anti-Israel clauses in PLO Charter

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The Palestinian opposition reaffirmed its continued commitment to anti-Israel clauses in the PLO Charter Sunday despite a vote by the PLO's second highest body Thursday confirming their annulment.

The PLO central council's vote "does not express the wish of the people," the 10 opposition factions which advocate continued armed resistance to the Jewish state said in a draft statement.

The statement reaffirmed "the attachment of the Palestinian people to the National Charter as the basis of its unity," said Maher Taher, spokesman for the largest PLO opposition faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The statement also reaffirmed the 10 factions' support for "struggle of all kinds" against the Israeli occupation, Taher said.

But as a nod to moderates who do not wish to break off all dialogue with the Palestinian National Authority, the draft statement stopped short of calling for the establishment of a rival PLO, participants in the meeting said.

The "compromise" statement would reflect "points in common" between the different opposition factions, said participants who asked not to be named.

The opposition's two-day "general national congress" here, which was intended to upstage U.S. President Bill Clinton's landmark visit to the

Palestinian territories Monday, has been marred by an open rift between moderates and hardliners over the question of breaking with the mainstream PLO.

On Saturday the leader of the PFLP's smaller rival, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), stormed out of the congress accusing armchair militants "who have not fired a shot at the Israeli enemy" of seeking to speak for the whole opposition.

"We are not a single party — there are disagreements," Nayer Hawameh said.

Participants say the two main PLO opposition factions are worried that moves by hardliners to set up a rival PLO to that led by Arafat will lead

to a permanent split between Palestinians in the territories and those in the diaspora.

The two main Islamist factions, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad, form part of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces opposition umbrella group but have never been part of the PLO.

The DFLP and PFLP have distanced themselves from the Alliance of Palestinian Forces in recent months.

In a sop to the Islamists, the PFLP spokesman said the congress's final statement would describe resistance to Israel as not only a Palestinian duty but "also an Arab and Islamic one."

Clinton: Resignation 'never crossed my mind'

TEL AVIV (AP) — With a grave impeachment threat overshadowing his Mideast diplomacy, President Bill Clinton declared Sunday he will not resign and "it's never crossed my mind." He suggested Republican leaders oppose a censure vote in fear the lesser punishment might pass.

Clinton said three-quarters of the American people believe censure rather than impeachment is "the right thing to do." He urged lawmakers to "vote their conscience on the Constitution and the law."

Rebuffing Republican demands, Clinton also said he would never admit to perjury. "I could not do something that I am quite sure I did not do," the president said. But Clinton agreed with his attorney, Charles Ruff, who when asked if the president had lied, said that reasonable people could conclude the president had crossed that line and had made false statements — but had not committed perjury.

Four days before the 435-member House sits in solemn judgement on four articles of impeachment, Clinton faced an embarrassing barrage of impeachment questions at a news conference with Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

At a delicate moment in the Mideast peace process, the prime minister grew uneasy as Israeli journalists and then American reporters relentlessly questioned Clinton about his fate.

"I don't know what's going to happen," the president said, adding that his fate rested with the House. "It's out of my hands."

The prime minister urged reporters to focus on the endangered land-for-peace deal signed Oct. 23 between Israel and the Palestinians.

From a lectern under a tent outside Netanyahu's office, the president reached out to wavering lawmakers, offering to answer any questions or concerns if they contact him. But he said it would be inappropriate for him to initiate calls because House members should not be put under undue pressure — even though "many of them have said they feel such pressure."

The president might return calls to lawmakers from this trip, press secretary Joe Lockhart said. "To the extent that anyone wants to call, he'll make time available to talk to

Clinton promises prompt decision on Pollard

TEL AVIV (AP) — President Bill Clinton on Sunday promised a prompt decision on whether to free a former U.S. navy intelligence analyst convicted of spying for Israel after a review is complete in January. Clinton noted he had promised Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would look into his request for leniency for Jonathan Pollard, who was sentenced to life for handing over thousands of top secret documents to Israel in the mid-1980s. "I have instituted the review that I pledged to the prime minister, and we've never done this on a case before, but I told him I would do it, and we did it," Clinton said.

members," he said.

Grim-faced, Clinton vowed he would not resign as Richard Nixon did 24 years ago as he faced a House impeachment vote.

"It's never crossed my mind," the president said.

He said he was not surprised by the House Judiciary Committee's party-line votes accusing him of perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

"It's been obvious to anyone who is following it for weeks, that the vote was foreordained."

With time running out, White House aides were desperately searching for a strategy

to save Clinton from becoming only the second president in history to be impeached. Lockhart said he was unaware of any plans for a presidential address before the impeachment vote, but he did not rule it out.

The vote poses a big test for incoming House Speaker Bob Livingston, who must decide whether to step in with a compromise or stand aside as Republicans act in defiance of the wishes of most Americans. Livingston and outgoing House Speaker Newt Gingrich endorsed Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde's view that no vote on censure should be allowed.

Iran under mounting pressure to solve mystery murders

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian MPs and intellectuals issued an urgent appeal on Sunday for the government to solve a spate of murders and kidnappings after a third Iranian writer was found killed in suspicious circumstances.

Mohammad Pouyandeh, an art critic and translator active in calls for freedom of expression, was found dead in the town of Shahrivar on the outskirts of Tehran, the government newspaper Iran said on Sunday.

Pouyandeh disappeared on Wednesday, the same day a fellow member of the Association of Iranian Writers, Mohammad Mokhtari, was reported to have been murdered. He was found dead on Saturday.

Iran said the victim had been "strangled by a person or persons who did not remove his watch or gold ring," but took his identity papers.

Pouyandeh is the third Iranian writer to have died in mysterious circumstances recently after Mokhtari and Majid Sharif.

According to Iranian newspapers, Pouyandeh and Mokhtari had planned along

with several other authors to form a writers' association. But they were recently summoned to the justice ministry and told their venture was illegal.

Their deaths follow the murder last month of secular nationalist opposition leader Daryush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh.

The chain of killings has triggered fear among dissident intellectuals and led to mounting pressure on the authorities to investigate.

Judiciary spokesman Ali Abbasi said judicial officials met Sunday to discuss the murders and other public security issues.

"Evidence shows that there is a mysterious and organised move inspired by foreign elements to undermine security and cause anxiety in the society," he said.

"The judiciary will fully cooperate with the government and intelligence, police and security forces to fight this sinister phenomenon," he told the official news agency IRNA.

About 50 Iranian authors appealed to President Mohammad Khatami to ensure their safety.

Ali Sa'd arrested

(Continued from page 1)

The Ministry of Industry and Trade has dissolved the company's board of directors and appointed a special committee comprised representatives of the private and public sector to manage the tobacco company after the Arab Bank, the company's major creditor, moved against it.

The Arab Bank earlier this year filed a court case

against the eldest tobacco company for defaulting on a JD5.5 million debt.

The company's debts to local banks are around JD22 million, the company's reports show.

Emrani told the Jordan Times that despite the troubles surrounding the company it will continue working.

There are around 300 employees on the payroll of the 67-year-old tobacco manufacturer.

Israel's Sharon says early elections possible

TEL AVIV (R) — Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said on Sunday that Israel's government, deeply divided over a peace deal with the Palestinians, may be forced to call early national elections.

Israeli politicians left and right have predicted the only way embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can hold his rightist coalition together is to abandon a land-for-peace deal with the Palestinians.

"If we don't manage to stabilise the coalition, apparently there will be no avoiding going to elections at the initiative of the government,"

Sharon said during a visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton to save the deal he helped forge.

Sharon, a member of Netanyahu's rightist Likud Party, spoke to reporters ahead of scheduled Dec. 21 no-confidence vote in parliament that could topple Netanyahu and move elections forward to early 1999 from late 2000.

Sharon said that with all of the problems facing Israel in making peace and other realms, it was impossible to go on chasing after the vote of every cabinet minister, every party and every member of parliament.

Remains of 110 people found in Algerian mass grave

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian authorities have found the remains of about 110 people buried in a mass grave near Algiers, the local daily Liberté said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a bomb exploded on Sunday on a weekly market in the town of Aflou, some 300 kilometres south of Algiers, killing a 25-year-old man, state-run radio said, quoting government security forces.

And in another incident in what appears to be a bloody rebel build-up to the Holy Month of Ramadan, Liberté said Islamist had slashed the throats of four villagers on Friday in Ahmer Al 'Ain, some 60 kilometres west of Algiers.

The daily Le Matin said authorities had found another mass grave near the hamlet of Haouch Germain, but had not yet started digging there as they were busy try-

ing to identify those unearthed from the first grave, found in the same area.

Liberté quoted government police as saying the excavation in a well in an orange grove in the Meftah region, some 20 kilometres southwest of central Algiers, had concluded on Saturday.

It was not clear how long the bodies had been in the well but Liberté said the victims had been killed before being dumped in a site that was a base of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Algeria's radical guerrilla faction.

The government has so far made no comment on the discovery, extensively reported by non-government newspapers over the past two weeks.

El Watan, the Algerian daily widely believed to be the best informed on security matters, last week quoted government workers as say-



WAITING FOR CLINTON: Two huge U.S. and Palestinian flags hang from the control tower of Palestinian Gaza International Airport in Rafah City on Sunday. U.S. President Bill Clinton, currently visiting Israel, will make a historic visit to Gaza on Monday. It will be the first ever visit by a U.S. president to the Palestinian territories (AFP photo)

Iraq, U.N. offer different stories on last day of surprise inspections

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq and UNSCOM offered conflicting stories of weapons inspections carried out Sunday, the last day of surprise checks designed to test Baghdad's cooperation ahead of a crucial U.N. review of sanctions against Iraq.

The chief Iraqi liaison with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarming Iraq, General Hussam Mohammad Amin, said an UNSCOM team unexpectedly cut short its work on Sunday and left Baghdad.

"The team of Australian Roger Hill cut short its mission on Sunday and left Iraq, although it had been expected to carry out a surprise inspection," said Amin.

The official INA news agency quoted Amin as saying that Hill "did not give any reason for suspending his mission or for his precipitous departure for Bahrain," where UNSCOM has its rear base.

But UNSCOM spokeswoman Caroline Cross, who had said earlier that Hill had left Baghdad, told AFP that his team completed its work and carried out its inspections "exactly" according to instructions from UNSCOM headquarters in New York. She also

said that although most of the personnel involved in the surprise inspections would be out of Iraq by Monday, one team would be remaining to carry out inspections until the end of the week, adding that the delay would have "no effect" on a report due Tuesday from U.N. arms chief Richard Butler.

The report, which is to be submitted to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, will play a key role in determining a "comprehensive review" of U.N. sanctions imposed eight years ago on Iraq.

UNSCOM resumed surprise inspections last Tuesday and Hill's team became embroiled in controversy the following day when it was barred from entering the headquarters of the ruling Baath Party.

The team was then blocked for nearly an hour Thursday before being allowed access to an Iraqi site deemed suspect.

The United States branded the two incidents "unacceptable," swiftly ordered seven B-52 bombers to the region and warned that Baghdad risked U.S. attack without warning if it does not cooperate.

An Iraqi minister said Saturday that the arms experts would be allowed to inspect Baath headquarters only with

the party's agreement.

But the Baath Party's Al Thawra newspaper said Sunday that UNSCOM was involved "in a plot aimed at Iraq's sovereignty, independence and political regime."

"It exceeds its prerogatives and assigned limits every day... provoking crises," the paper said. "UNSCOM is called on to end its inspections and to pass to a system of monitoring, so that the unjust embargo imposed on Iraq can be lifted."

The surprise checks were scheduled ahead of a U.N. Security Council decision on whether Iraq's restored cooperation with inspectors was sufficient to avoid military action against Baghdad.

Diplomats in New York said Annan appears to be working on the assumption that the proposed "comprehensive review" of Iraqi sanctions would go ahead rather than the military option.

Iraq's resumption of cooperation on Nov. 14 narrowly averted U.S. and British air strikes.

But Washington and London insist that they remain ready to strike without warning or without seeking further authorisation from the Security Council if Iraq fails to cooperate with inspectors.

Clinton-Netanyahu talks seem to yield no results

(Continued from page 1)

His statement on unilateral actions was a clear reference to pledges by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to declare an independent state if a permanent peace deal is not reached by the end of an interim five-year period next May.

However, expectations are high that the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and other Palestinian groups, will vote today to amend articles in the PLO's Charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

"We hope that tomorrow the PNA will, once and for all, (carry out) at least one of their obligations, that the PNC members will vote in sufficient numbers to annul the infamous Palestinian Charter," said Netanyahu.

Although this will be a purely ceremonial move, it is intended to serve as a confidence-building measure for the Israeli public.

If the expected vote does

take place "in sufficient numbers," a three-way summit between Arafat, Clinton and Netanyahu is likely to take place Monday evening, sources said. A decision to move ahead with the next troop withdrawal could also be announced, albeit at a two-week delay, they said.

The issue of Palestinian prisoners, which has caused violent clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians in the West Bank, figured on yesterday's agenda, sources said, but Israeli officials refused to comment on this. An Israeli journalist said that Israel refused to budge on this issue, with Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon saying that the Palestinian prisoners could be freed in an eventual overall settlement with the PNA.

An Israeli official dismissed media reports that a Palestinian-Israeli-American committee would be formed to review each of the 750-prisoner cases individually.

Boy alerts 911 about charred cookie emergency

BAZETTA (AP) — A 4-year-old boy called police when he recognised an emergency — his mom overbaked the gingerbread man. Police dispatched an officer who checked out the scene Thursday night and spoke with the boy. "He told the boy that because the gingerbread man doesn't breathe and doesn't bleed there was no need to call 911," Police Chief Robert Jacola said. The burned gingerbread man and five other cookies were taken to the 911 Centre. "We just want to keep them for sentimental value," said dispatcher Roger Laird.

Parrot foils burglar

DUISBURG (AFP) — A cat burglar got more than he bargained for when he tried to make off with a resident parrot from a Duisburg apartment, police here said Sunday. The housebreaker was apparently attempting to add the parrot to his haul but was no match for the bird's powerful beak and sharp claws. By the time police arrived there were traces of blood in the apartment, rather like a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's thriller "The Birds."

Looking for a sweet date? Try Monica

CAIRO (R) — Lovers of dried dates can now taste "Monica," the new brand name chosen by Egyptian makers of extra-sweet dates. Al Ahran newspaper reported on Sunday. It said the fruit, dried in a moderately hot oven, was named after former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, whose dates with U.S. President Bill Clinton may cost him his job if the House of Representatives votes to impeach him for his conduct. "Monica" dates recently hit the market in the southern resort town of Aswan, Al Ahran said.

Groom gets married and sentenced

EDWARDSVILLE (AP) — Judge Dan Stack runs a full-service courtroom. He presided over the marriage of a man — and sentenced him minutes later for bringing marijuana into the courthouse. "I wanted to sentence him for criminal stupidity," said Stack, a Madison County judge. "But I felt sorry for them both." The groom, Ewel Simon Greene, was arrested at the courtroom door Friday afternoon after a deputy using a metal detector discovered a metal pipe in his pocket, which led to a search that turned up a bag containing less than 2.5 grammes of marijuana.

Lump of cow dung lampoons art prize

LONDON (R) — A professional illustrator has shown the British art world what he thinks of the dried elephant dung-wielding painter who won Britain's top art prize — by dumping manure outside the gallery displaying his works. Ray Hutchins, a 66-year-old who makes his living drawing detailed military diagrams, emptied a wheelbarrow load of cow dung on the steps of London's Tate Gallery Thursday in cheers and some jeers from onlookers. A placard planted in the pile announced it as a work entitled "Modern Art is a load of bullshit."

Lottery winner flees 'friends'

HYDERABAD (R) — Kola Venkata Krishna Mohan, a 40-year-old Indian businessman from the town of Vijayawada in southern Andhra Pradesh state who won nearly \$20 million in a European lottery has fled an onslaught of advisors and admirers for a quiet holiday abroad, his brother said on Friday. "You see, all of a sudden, I became the busiest man. I have been receiving congratulations for 14 hours a day. My doctor has advised me to take rest," a local newspaper quoted him as saying.